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CONCENTRATION:
A PRACTICAL COURSE

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CONCENTRATION:

A PRACTICAL COURSE

By
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FOREWORD

MR. ERNEST WOOD is well known as both a writer and a lecturer on religious and educational matters, and his work is always careful and thoughtful. A practical course on Concentration is a subject for which he is well equipped, and this little work should prove very useful to the serious student. It is admirably planned, and effectively carried out, and—a most important fact in such a treatise—there is nothing in it which when practiced, can do the striver after concentration the least physical, mental or moral harm. I can therefore heartily recommend it to all who desire to obtain control of the mind.

ANNIE BESANT

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CHAPTER I

SUCCESS IN LIFE

Do you desire success in life? Will you take the means that infallibly secure it? Will you choose, and say to yourself: I will have wealth, I will have fame; I will have virtue; I will have power? Will you let your imagination play upon the thought, and watch the dim clouds of hope shape themselves into heavenly possibilities? Give wings to your fancy, for fairer than any picture that you can paint with thought is the future that you can claim with will. Once you have imagined, once you have chosen, say: I WILL. And there is nothing on earth, or in the heavens above, or in the waters under the earth, that can hinder you for long; for you are immortal and the future is obedient to you.

You say that death will stand in your way! It WILL NOT. You say that poverty and sickness and friends will stand in your way! THEY WILL NOT. But you must choose, and never again must you *wish* for anything. But you must say: I WILL. And you must say it always in thought and in deed, not only now in word. And henceforth never for a moment must your purpose change, but your constant intention must turn everything you touch into line with it. Then, if that which you have chosen is not harmful, it will be yours before long.

You speak of the littleness of man, lost in the wrinkles of giant mother earth, herself as a speck of dust in the infinitudes of space! IT IS NOT SO. You talk of weakness and fatigue, of the immediate follies and pleasures and proprieties and accidents of life—how these confine and limit little man. IT IS NOT SO. The body is only a garment and the senses but peep-holes in the veil of flesh,

and when these are quiet and that is obedient, and the mind dwells in contemplation of your immortal possibilities, a window opens within you, and through it you *see* and know that you shall be what you will to be, and nothing else.

As the tiny seed, buried in the ground, bursts and puts forth a tender shoot, which pushes its way through the soil and wins its freedom in the upper air, and presently there is a mighty oak, peopling the earth with portions of itself, or, as a great banyan spreads without limit from a little root, providing wealth and home for myriads of creatures; so put ye forth this day the first tender but not uncertain shoot of will, and choose what you will be.

What will you choose? Will you have power? Then let others be freer and more powerful because you are so. Will you have knowledge? Then let others be wiser because you are so. Will you have love? Then let others enjoy it because you have much to give. Thus will your will be in accord with the Great Will and the Great Law, and your life be one with the Great Life, without which there can be no permanent success.

What will be your means? Everything that you meet, small and great; for there is nothing that you cannot use as a means to your end. But once more, let all the persons and the things that you use be benefitted by the use. Thus your success will be theirs also, and the Great Law will be fulfilled.

But, whatever you choose, one thing you will need in all things and at all times—concentration of purpose, of thought, of feeling, of action; so that this, like a powerful magnet, will polarise everything with which you meet. In all the aims of life it is needed for success. The men who have succeeded in business, social and political life, in art, science and philosophy, in power and virtue, have all been marked out by an unwavering fixity of purpose and control of mind, though often they have unwisely

neglected the Great Law. Has it not happened always, is it not happening now, and will it not happen in the future, that so far as human progress is in human hands it is achieved by systematic and persistent activity, control of desires and concentration of mind, and without these it is not achieved?

Read the lives and philosophy of every type of purposeful men, and you will find this fact recorded in them. The Epicurean of old concentrated his mind upon the present and tried to live in accord with natural laws. He did not allow his mind to dwell with regret upon anything past nor to have fears or anxieties for the future. The Stoic fixed his attention upon the things which lay in his control, refusing to be disturbed by anything that lay outside his power and purpose, or to waste thought and feeling upon it. The Platonist strove to fix his mind, with reverent inquiry, upon the mysteries of life. Patañjali, the great master of Indian Yoga, declared that man could come to his own true state only by the successful practice of complete control of mind. The religious devotee strives, by filling his life and surroundings with ceremonies and symbols, and by constantly repeating in thought the names of God, to stimulate his mind to ever stronger and stronger devotional feelings. The successful man of knowledge is so intent upon his purpose that he finds instruction in the most trifling things that he meets. Such is the power of mind that with its aid all things can be bent to our purpose, and such is the power of man that he can bend the mind to his will.

Do we not find that indecision, trepidation, anxiety and worry give rise to bodily ills, weakness, indigestion and sleeplessness? Even in these small matters regular practice of control of mind, in a simple form, acts like a magic cure. It is the best means of escape from envy, jealousy, resentment, discontent, delusion, self-deception, pride, anger and fear. Without it the building of charac-

ter cannot be carried on, and with it it cannot fail. Any study is successful in proportion to the mental concentration brought to bear upon it; and the practice largely increases the reproductive powers of memory.

One of the high efforts and achievements of concentration of mind has been well described by Mrs. Annie Besant in the following words:

The student must begin by practising extreme temperance in all things, cultivating an equable and serene state of mind; his life must be clean and his thoughts pure, his body held in strict subjection to the soul, and his mind trained to occupy itself with noble and lofty themes; he must habitually practise compassion, sympathy, helpfulness to others, with indifference to troubles and pleasures affecting himself, and he must cultivate courage, steadfastness and devotion. Having, by persevering practice, learned to control his mind to some extent, so that he is able to keep it fixed on one line of thought for some little time, he must begin its more rigid training by a daily practice of concentration on some difficult or abstract subject, or on some lofty object of devotion. This concentration means the firm fixing of the mind on one single point, without wandering, and without yielding to any distractions caused by external objects, by the activity of the senses, or by that of the mind itself. It must be braced up to an unswerving steadiness and fixity, until gradually it will learn so to withdraw its attention from the outer world and from the body that the senses will remain quiet and still, while the mind is intensely alive with all its energies drawn inwards to be launched at a single point of thought, the highest to which it can attain. When it is able to hold itself thus with comparative ease it is ready for a further step, and by a strong but calm effort of the will it can throw itself beyond the highest thought it can reach while working in the physical brain, and in that effort will rise to and unite itself with the higher consciousness and find itself free of the body.

Of that higher life beyond the brain you may read details in her valuable Theosophical books; how it opens up before man endless vistas of knowledge and power, altogether beyond anything imaginable in the cramping limitations of the brain. But if you pursue the spiritual life by more devotional methods, there again you will find the same necessity for concentration of purpose. An ancient scripture says that the devotee should see God in everything and everything in God. Whatever action you

perform of eating, of sacrificing, of giving, of striving—do that as an offering unto Him. A man can do this only when he has acquired concentration. Then, what more will he want when he ever beholds the face of his Father? To those who knock also at the portal of the Holy Path, we find it written in a recent famous book, *At the Feet of the Master*, that the aspirant must achieve one-pointedness and control of mind.

In yet another way has concentration of mind been used. The literature of religion is full of instances of remarkably extended vision of unseen things attained by the rapt mind. Indian Yogis and Fakirs enumerate eight sets of faculties and powers, including vision of the absent, the past and the future, psychic telescopic and microscopy, the power of travelling invisibly in the subtle body, and others—all attainable by concentration. Marvellous as these effects are, and fascinating as are the study and the practice which lead to them not less interesting and effectual is the application of concentration to the workings of our normal senses, and in the extension of our power and knowledge in the familiar world of everyday life.

What, then, does this concentration mean, and what practices should we follow to gain control of mind? It does not mean a narrowing, limiting, confining of our thoughts and activities. It does not mean retiring to the forest or the cave. It does not mean a loss of human sympathies and interests. It does not mean that the wine of life has run dry in our veins, like a desert river in the summer drought. It does mean that the whole of our life is inspired with one purpose. It does mean increased thought, increased activity, widened sympathies: for we are ever on the look-out to use all things for the one great aim.

CHAPTER II

MIND AND MOOD

THE mental practice of concentration is control of mind, domination of mind by a mood, stamped upon it by the will, so that all your thinking will be bent to the purpose which you have chosen.

What is this mind that you are going to control? What part of the mind is in your power? These points must be considered before you take up the definite practices, for he will be a poor workman who does not understand his tool.

You have an instrument in the outer world. You will, and it moves. It is the body, and it carries you about in this great world according to your will. It is your vehicle, bearing the sense organs which inform you of all that comes within their reach. I sit in my room and look around. In front of me are the table and chairs, on the walls the large book shelves, the clock, pictures, calendars, and numerous other things, against the walls are chests of drawers and cabinets. I look through the window, and there are the tops of the palm and mango trees, the white March clouds of Madras, and beyond them the ethereal blue. I attend to my ears—a crow squawks over on the left, the clock ticks on the wall, footsteps shuffle in the distance, there is a murmur of distant voices, a squirrel chirrups near at hand, the pandits are droning down below, a typewriter rattles somewhere else, and behind these is the constant roar of the breakers of the Bay on the Adyar beach half a mile away. I attend more closely, and hear the blood rumbling in my ears, and the long-drawn distant whistle of some obscure physiological process. I turn my attention to my skin,

and now I feel the pen upon which my fingers gently press, the clothes upon my back, the chair in which I sit, the floor upon which my feet are placed, the warm soft summer wind pressing on my hands and face. So, these senses, carried about in this vehicle of my body, which is the instrument of my will and the focus of my consciousness in the outer world, bring me into touch with something, but really how little, of the vast world in which they live. I have moved about in this body for a few years, and seen and heard and felt many things in many places, but how little of that experience of mine exists in my momentary consciousness, how infinitely little even the whole of it has been in comparison with the great world which I have not seen or known.

And what of this? Much; for of the same nature is the inner world, the world of the mind, the mental world. There also is a vast world of true ideas, some of which I now know with the vehicle of my mind, some more of which I have known in the past, but most of which remains for me the illimitable unknown. In that world also I have an instrument, and by my will it travels about in the world of thought, pursues a course of mental life, just as my body lives and moves about in the outer world. What is my vehicle in the mental world? It is the mind, the focus of my consciousness for mental things. Let us say that this small mental body, in which I am able to attend, is like a little fish swimming about in the vast ocean of ideas, and there seeing and informing me of what comes within the range of its limited faculties. It cannot see beyond a limited range, it cannot leap through infinity, it must travel through intermediate points to pass from one place to another, from one idea to another. It is this little fish of attention that you have to control, so that it may (1) always swim in the direction which you have chosen; and (2) extend and improve its range of vision, its ability to present to you fully and clearly the events that it meets as it travels through the world of thought.

An idea is not an evanescent thing. Every time that I look at an object afresh, a new image is made on the retina of my eye, yet the object is one. Every time that I think an idea afresh, a new image is produced in my mind, but the idea is one. When the mind is steady we may see the ideas most clearly, and even receive from them direct intuitive knowledge. The most perfect creations of the mind are but models from living ideas, as the most perfect statues are but the best reproductions of forms most accurately seen.

While I am writing I am not thinking of my leg; but if the cat sharpens his claws upon my calf my attention is at once drawn to it. The limb was there—a part of the body—all the time; but the attention was not. This is true also of the mind; I may be writing an essay upon psychology, not at all thinking that I must call on Mr. Smith at four o'clock, as appointed, to discuss the budget and some mild tea, when suddenly the word "discrimination," which I find I have written, reminds me of Mr. Smith's nice taste in mild tea and at once brings my attention into line with the whole business of my appointment, which had been lying unnoticed in the recesses of my mind. There is no *a priori* reason for supposing that the realities of the mind are blotted out of existence just because and when we are not thinking of them, any more than that external objects disappear from the field of existence at times when we are unaware of them. If I look at a house it is the same house that another may look at. We may see it together, or he may see it in my absence. It exists for him at times when I am not aware of it, and we both recognise that it is the *same* house that we see, though we see it differently and different. Similarly, really when we think an idea it is the *same idea* that we both think, but most of us still need to understand that our mental experience mirrors one reality, to realise that we all live in a single actual world of thought wherein all true ideas exist whether we see them, attend to them, or not.

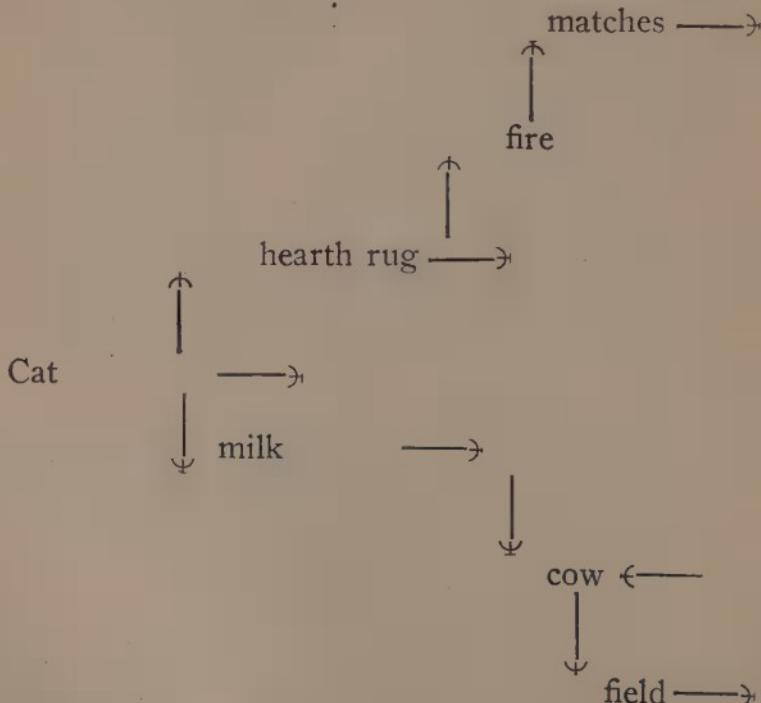
A slight study of the mind reveals the fact that when we are clearly thinking of one thing, we are at the same time vaguely conscious of many other things more or less nearly or remotely related to it. Just as when I fix my eyes upon the ink-bottle before me I see also vaguely other things on the table, the articles of furniture to left and right, the trees in the garden outside—a multitude of details; so also when I fix my attention upon a particular thought I find a mass of vague thoughts around it, gradually shading off, becoming more indefinite as more remote, and finally losing themselves at no definite limit. As the attention passes from object to object in this field of attention it finds no limit, and its horizon forever recedes as it approaches it.

Suppose, for example, that I think of a cat. At once I seem to see a cat, and around that idea cluster a number of other little pictures such as the saucer of milk of which the cat is very fond or the hearth-rug on which it lies. The wandering mind will step on to "hearth-rug," let us say; then I seem to see a hearth-rug, and the cat has become a fainter picture than it was before, while other little pictures rise up, such as "fire" or "factory." Once more the mind passes on, to "factory," and I seem to see a lot of people working at looms, while now the cat has almost disappeared and the mind wanders on to pastures new.

This chain of thought presents an unbroken succession in the inner life. Each idea is succeeded by another like the links in a chain. As in time things follow one after another, only two moments with their contents being linked directly together, so in the flow of mental activity, images follow one after another, only two being linked directly. In the course of our mental life ideas do not penetrate the mind in a mass or jumble, but in regular succession, and the flow of ideal activity is best represented by a series of circles overlapping and following each other. It is desirable to study the course of

thoughts in the mind and notice the nature of the linkage between two successive ideas. These linkages are listed and classified in my little book on memory.

This flow of ideal activity is *nothing* more than the track of the fish of attention, as it passes along in this direction or that. It is constantly swimming about, and the direction or trend of its travelling is dependent upon the mood at the time. To concentrate the mind on one purpose we must set up a *mood* of concentration so that, in the series of thoughts or ideas it will always dominate the selection of the link in the mental chain, and thus the train of thought will not wander away from the desire for control or concentration. The following diagram will show how slight is the first parting of the ways of thought, but how wide asunder the paths soon go:



In this inner world the attention is constantly being called from many directions at once. The first finds him-

self surrounded with various alluring baits. Which will he take, at any given time; in which direction will he be drawn? Will he prefer "hearth-rug" or "milk"? Every idea calls up many other ideas or is associated with them. When I look at the banyan tree outside my verandah I see and hear the throngs of crows and squirrels, and now any thought of a banyan tree will at once bring up within its circle a vision of this particular tree, with its spreading branches and hanging roots, the fern-pots beneath it, the audacious crows, and the chattering, shrieking, striped brown squirrels. But at once thoughts of other kinds of trees also enter into the circle of attention, though further from the centre; the tall straight palm, the wrinkled oak, the slender poplar, the sad shorn willow of central England, the trim pine among the northern snows. Then again, as I view its spreading branches and its many trunks bearing the weight of giant arms ten centuries old my mind runs back to the history which it might tell; the floods of the river running near, the building of the houses and the making of roads, and far back in the past of the breezy jungle growth, the jackals and the tigers, the countless ants, the scorpions and the snakes which nestled in its hollows and lay upon its branches in the centuries that are past. If my mood changes again I might notice its vast extent—a mountain of wood—and think how a great army might shelter beneath it, how it would build ten houses, or make a thousand roaring fires. Thus the banyan tree calls up the crows and squirrels, bungalows and roads, other sorts of trees, its roots, branches, leaves and trunk, its size and use, beauty and strength, and so on, and each of these in turn calls up another circle of ideas.

Along which line of ideas will the attention travel? Which bait will the fish take? There is an endless competition among the objects of the senses for our notice; there is likewise an endless competition within the world of the mind for our attention. In the succession of ideas what is it that determines that one idea shall succeed

another on any given occasion rather than a third idea which is quite as closely connected with it?

Let me put the problem in another way. Suppose I am sitting at my desk in the centre of my library: when suddenly all the four doors of the room open at once, and with the precision of the cuckoo from an old cottage clock, my friends Smith, Brown, Jones and Robinson enter and exclaim in one voice: "Ah, Wood, I want to consult you about something!" Which will first claim my surprised attention? This will certainly depend upon something or other. It will depend upon the *mood of the mind* or the direction in which the fish was swimming at the moment of surprise. The only other thing which could determine it would be a greater regard and more frequent thought of one friend than of the others, or some unusual peculiarity in dress or gesture, which we are not supposing to be present. Of course, if Brown were dressed as a Turk he would first claim attention; but, all things being equal, nothing but the mood of the mind at the moment would determine the selection of the attention.

Again, suppose that I am engaged in the work of putting a book through the press, and some one comes to the door and calls out "proofs," I have visions of printed sheets and the drudgery of correcting them, but if I am engaged in studying a scientific problem the same sound at once awakens a totally different set of ideas. Here it is clear that the difference which determines the result lies in the mind, not in the outside world. If Mr. Lincoln Inn the eminent barrister, is in town and some one utters in his hearing the word "bag," he at once thinks of briefs and all the paraphernalia of his profession; but if it is the vacation and he is engaged in his favourite sport upon the moors, the word at once brings before him gratifying visions of forlorn-looking birds tied by the legs, and pleasant recollections of his skill and prowess and past triumphs on the field of sport.

At different times, different moods, purposes, habits and interests dominate our minds, and it is the *mood* which is the cause that one idea rather than another of the many which surround every thought and object, should be selected. As a powerful magnet polarises soft iron within a considerable area, not only in immediate proximity, so does the temporary or permanent mood *polarise* each incoming idea as soon as it approaches the outermost sphere of the field of attention.

Most of us are familiar with the schoolboy experiment with a test-tube loosely filled with iron filings. We corked it and laid it down, and as we passed a magnet slowly over it, we watched the filings rise and lay themselves in order, now a lot of little magnets all acting together. At first, they lay higgledy-piggledy, and, if they had been magnets, the influence of one would have neutralised that of its neighbour ; but when they all lie in line they act as a powerful magnet upon all soft iron that is brought near to them. So also if our thoughts lie higgledy-piggledy, pointing in all directions, their effects will destroy one another. Make then the effort to establish a prevailing mood, and all your ideas will be polarised to this.

Thus we see that the train of thought follows the mood, and, this realised, we may notice that success in the pursuit of any aim may be assured by establishing a permanent mood in its direction. When this is done even the most trifling of the most adverse events will fall into line and prove of service to us in the gaining of our end. This fact was well expressed by a great Greek philosopher who said that he had come into the world only to do one thing, to perfect himself, and that there was nothing in the world that could possibly deter him, for there was nothing that he could not use for his purpose.

CHAPTER III

FIRST PRACTICES—RECALL

THE first thing to do is to select the mood that you will have, and then to eliminate all those things that agitate the mind in any way. Therefore you must try to get rid of every trace of anger, irritation, anxiety, uncertainty and fear. When such qualities are allowed in the mind there can be no real exercise of will, no real permanence of mood. Success in the practice of mind-control is dependent upon steadiness of mood, and if you are still so infantile in character as to be swayed to anger, anxiety and fear by the so-called accidents of life you cannot, until you command yourself, have anything better than shifting moods and a wandering mind. Only the things that are pure and good and kind and calm can be permanent; anger and fear and all their kin are of the essence of agitation and impermanence. Therefore the mood you select must be compatible with your best and most unselfish ideal—unselfish not only for yourself but also for others. You can no longer regard life as a battle with others or for a few others, nor desire to control others, but your aim is the gradual mastery of self and the development of your own powers; and your only possible attitude towards others, to all and all the time, is that of a benevolent intention to share with them the freedom and power that you are winning for yourself.

Remember the first question. Dare you face the mental and emotional shock of resolving that you will accept the facts of life, and not wish that nature and the Great Law had put different material within your reach? At least you must say, every time that you find yourself wishing: Stop that; I will not have it.

Think then what this change of consciousness would

mean to you. What would it mean to you when you rise in the morning, when you eat, when you lie down to sleep? What would it mean to you when you meet your companions, your friends, your so-called enemies? What would it mean to you when you lose your appointment or your money, when you fall ill and your family suffers? Sit down, and think over all the disagreeable things that may happen within the next week, and see in each case what it would mean to you. It would mean that you would not wish them to be otherwise; it would mean that you would say to each of them: What are you for, what use can I make of you? It would mean that you would not sink down and say: I am sorry—or, I wish—. It would mean that you would get up and say: I will—or I will not—. There is no *hope* for you in this mood—but there is certainty. There is no expectation—there is knowledge. There is no fear—there is confidence in the Great Law within you and in all things.

Every morning, before you begin the day, spend five minutes in thinking over this strong outlook upon life. Every night, before you go to rest, spend five minutes in glancing back to see how you have maintained your determination during the past day. Do not look back and ask yourself especially: In what have I erred? But look back and ask yourself especially: In what have I succeeded? And each day will tell its tale of achievement. Do not wish; do not regret; do not hope. But when you sleep whisper gently: I WILL. And when you wake whisper gently: I WILL.

And your next task will be, for a time, to watch the little things, to economise all your powers, and waste none in idle thought, or in idle emotion, or in idle action.

During the day do not do one thing while thinking about another. Thought and action must be unified—no thought be permitted without reference to action or intended action, and no action be performed without intention. By this practice all day long the mind and body

are taught to act together, without any waste of physical or mental energy. And thus you will suppress all idle action and idle thought.

As regards *idle action*, avoid all the small wasteful activities and mannerisms in which people semi-unconsciously indulge, such as shaking the knees, or swinging the foot over the knee, uttering useless phrases such as "you see," "of course," "er-er," twirling the moustache, scratching, biting, or picking the nails, pulling at buttons or watch-guards, purposeless conversations, and so forth. Every action or word should have a purpose behind it. The larger wasteful activities must also be proscribed, such as lying in bed late in the morning, wasting time at night, eating unnecessary food, struggling to obtain things which are not really required. Thirdly, bodily excitement and nervous muscular tension are to be avoided as far as possible. These wasteful habits are difficult to change suddenly, and it is better to make a resolution to operate for an hour daily and carry it out, gradually increasing the time, than to resolve to change every useless habit at once and fail to carry the resolution out.

As regards *idle thought*, avoid the habits of lying awake in bed and thinking things over before going to sleep; that of lying in a semi-dream state on awakening; that of dwelling again and again on the same thought or argument. If anything requires to be thought over, bring forward and consider all the facts bearing upon it, arrive at a conclusion and then dismiss the matter from the mind; and never consider it again unless you can bring some new facts to bear upon it. If the reasons for and against a course of action seem equal, it cannot matter much which way the decision goes—toss up a coin and have done with the trouble, but do not permit the mind to revolve the matter again and again. If a difficulty arises, do not procrastinate, deal with it completely there and then, and dismiss its further consideration, or

appoint a special time for settling it; do not on any account let anxiety, fear and distress ramble about the mind, poisoning and enfeebling it. Avoid thinking too much about what you are going to do—do it. Do not think about what others say about you, except to extract from it the element of truth which is always there. On no account make the imperfections of others a subject of your thought. If the brain is torpid, do not eat after dark, or sleep after dawn and take mild exercise and fresh air.

There remains still the removal of *idle emotion*. The seeking of small pleasures which are not recreative, and the indulgence in emotion without its corresponding action and thought are weakening to the will. Your chief purpose should be your chief pleasure—if it is not so either the purpose or the pleasure is unhealthy.

So much for the concentration that is desirable in the course of daily life. We are now concerned especially with the deliberate daily practice of control of mind.

1. Select a suitable time, sit down quietly, and turn your mind to some agreeable thought. Place a watch with a seconds' hand before you, notice the time exactly, then close the eyes, thinking of the object, and endeavouring not to forget it. After a little time you will find that you have forgotten the object and are thinking about something else. Then enter in a note-book: (1) What you were concentrating upon, (2) the period of time, and (3) what you found yourself thinking of. The process may be repeated several times, but if the head aches it should be stopped for the time being. A simple and comparatively uninteresting object, such as a coin, or a watch, or a pen, should be selected for this preliminary experiment and the experiment should be continued for a short period each day for several days, say a week, full notes being kept in the little book.

You will usually find that your concentration on the object terminates for one of the following reasons: im-

patience, anxiety about something, dullness, bodily restlessness, pain in the head, a catch in the breath, interruption. This is often expressed by saying that the mind is restless. Let us for the present merely notice that the attention is much subject to interference, and by some cause, internal or external, is induced to wander from the object.

How are you to overcome this wandering? Form a *habit of recall*. How is this to be done? If you will carry out these things *as they are stated here* you will succeed.

It is usual for the student to sit down and fix the attention upon one thing, and bring it back to that point whenever it wanders from it. He is engaged principally in endeavouring to keep the thought before his mind, and partly in trying to avoid slipping away from it to notice other things; and he finds it necessary constantly to recall his errant attention. Take up the following practice in preference. *Decide upon the thing upon which your attention is to be fixed and then think about everything else you can without actually losing sight of it.*

The purpose of this practice will readily be seen when the links between ideas are studied. These links are classified in my little book on memory. It is sufficient for our present purpose to notice the process of thought as it flows through the brain. I see the tree outside my window, and think of it. The centre of the field of thought is the tree but it has surrounding it numerous other thoughts such as those represented in the following diagram:

- TREE** {
1. Garden, field, etc.
 2. Banyan, pine, etc.
 3. Age, size, value, etc.
 4. Bush, hedge, plant, etc.
 5. Leaves, branch, bark, etc.
 6. Crows, squirrels, insects, etc.
 7. Seed, blossom, fruit, etc.
 8. (x).

If I were a farmer my thought might pass along line 7 to an idea of fruit. Fruit would then become the centre of another circle of ideas, those belonging to 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 being passed by almost or entirely unnoticed. The mind might then pass on to market, a thought which has no direct connection with the tree, and the tree is now forgotten as the mind pursues its rambling course through, let us say, market, street, inn, post-horse, cow, milk, dairy and so forth.

If I were a merchant my thought might pass along line 3 (1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 remaining unnoticed) to an idea of lumber, which is directly connected with the thought of the tree, and on to the current prices (which have no direct connection with it), the state of my present finances, and so on.

A naturalist might pass along line 6, a huntsman or a pleasure-seeker along line 1, a philosopher along line 3 or line 7, all losing the tree at the third step of thought. The lines are numbered only as illustrations, not as a classification, for the radiations of thought are more numerous than this.

The gardener's thought, however, would not run radially away from the centre, but tend to return and wander round near the circle within it, because he is to some extent concentrated upon the subject by habit of mind. He is accustomed to thinking of the tree with reference to its growth, structure, appearance and surroundings in the garden.

When you follow the practice given in italics on page 18, your course of thought differs from the ordinary process of rambling in that instead of going along one of the lines and on to other thoughts not concerned directly with the object it goes only a little way along each line, and then returns. But you should try to go as far away as possible without losing sight of the object, to think

of everything you possibly can which has a direct relation or connection with it, along 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or any other line.

If this practice is thoroughly carried out during the time of concentration it produces a *habit of recall* which replaces the habit of wandering, so that it becomes the inclination of the mind to return to the central thought, and the attention can be kept upon the one thing for a long time. At the same time the practice also vivifies the mind, so that in considering any subject it tends to notice rapidly all the points of importance in connection with it.

A simile which may assist us is that of a railway journey through a rich plain with a mountain in the distance. Sitting in the train we may notice the varied objects that are flitting past, near at hand the fences, bushes, trees and wayside houses, beyond them village, field, river, forest and lake—all the constantly changing country that lies between us and the hill—yet all the time we are aware of the mountain standing as a pivot round which all these things seem to turn. This preliminary practice of concentration should resemble such a journey, the intervening country being inspected but the central object of concentration towering above all.

Practice this for half-an-hour a day for about two weeks before you take any further steps. Keep careful notes of the object thought of, the length of time spent on each subject before you lose it, and the thoughts which you find in place of the lost object of concentration.

It does not matter much what object is selected, though it is best to avoid anything very large or complex at first, or anything with associations that are not agreeable. There is no objection to the use of images and symbols. The object may also be changed every few days.

Before sitting down select as quiet a place and as convenient a time as possible, then decide for how long you

intend to devote your attention to the purpose in hand, and say to yourself: "I am now going to do so-and-so for half-an-hour, and I have no concern with anything else in the world during this time." It is important that you should realise very clearly in imagination what you are about to do, and picture yourself as doing it before you begin.

CHAPTER IV

PRACTICES TO OVERCOME BODILY AND SENSUOUS INTERRUPTIONS

PERHAPS you have never before sat for a few minutes without moving. Try it now. Do not provide repose which would tend to sloth or sleepiness, but try a few times to sit quite still, without supporting the back above the waist for five or ten minutes, with the eyes closed, without feeling either restless or sleepy. Remember that bodily attitudes are associated with states of feeling, such as lying down with sleep, kneeling with prayer, and so on. Try to select an attitude for concentration which will be free from disturbing associations. It is generally found advantageous to sit upright with the eyes closed, the hands resting, and the head and neck straight but not stiff. You will probably find that the body is not so obedient as you would have it to be. It is often restless and impatient or troubled by trifling sensations, even when you have removed any causes of discomfort that there may be.

Do not permit this. The body must be your servant. Will you be master? Raise yourself up, and say: I WILL. Do not wish, but say: I WILL. And tomorrow, and each day for one month from this time, rise in the morning one hour before your usual time, and give that hour to the following exercises:

1. Standing still—ten minutes.
2. Relaxing—five minutes.
3. Stretching and bending exercises—ten minutes.
4. Nerve exercises—fifteen minutes.
5. Breathing exercises—ten minutes.
6. Inhibition of the senses—ten minutes.

Do all these faithfully at the same time every day for one month. If you miss one day begin again on the next and do the exercises for one full month without missing once. This will give you an opportunity of doing something that the body does not like to do, that is at once beneficial to the body and valuable training for the will. Train your body as a fancier would train a prize dog; do not starve it or beat it, but do not indulge it in idleness and luxury. If you find that under this new regime the old dirt comes to the surface, and the body becomes weak and ill—an effect due to past indulgence, not to present strain—stop the practice for a week. Then begin all over again and thus go on again and again until the body is a sound, clean, strong and supple instrument for carrying out your will. Repeat the effort again and again until the evil effects entirely disappear. You can, if you will.

Go into a room where you will not be disturbed, and stand erect, at attention, preferably before a mirror, having placed your watch in sight. Stand perfectly still for ten minutes. The eyes may blink; no attention need be paid to them. The body must not be allowed to sway, nor the fingers to twitch; and no notice whatever must be taken of any slight sensations. The mind may occupy itself in thinking in turn of the different parts of the body, and seeing that they are still. Probably the little fingers, or the shoulders, or some other part of the body, will ache, but no sympathy should be accorded them. As a variation of this practice, on alternate days, stand and stretch forth the arm and hand in front, horizontal, with the forefinger pointing, and try to remain perfectly still for ten minutes.

To render the body pliant and obedient, stretching, bending and relaxing exercises, and exercises for the nerves, are also needed. Relaxing exercises are intended to teach the body to be still without being tense. Stand at the end of a shelf, or sideboard, or an upright cottage

piano, so as to have before you a smooth horizontal surface a little below the shoulder in height. Stand quite close to it, facing it, and rest the arm upon it. Make a mental effort to withdraw all energy and strength from the arm, and let it rest on the board as though dead. Withdraw the energy little by little, paying attention to the fingers first, then to the hand and so on past the wrist to elbow and shoulder. Then step smartly away. If the arm falls as though dead it is relaxed, otherwise not. Instead of the foregoing, or in addition to it, try the following relaxation: Raise the left elbow above the shoulder and let the left hand be placed in front of the chest, with the palm downward. Let the right elbow be at the right side, and raise the right hand so that the down-turned fingers of the left hand may grasp it. Hold the right hand by the left. Slowly withdraw the energy of the right arm; then open the left hand, letting go of the right. If it *falls* lifeless, you have succeeded in relaxing. Having thus learned what relaxation feels like, you need not repeat the experiments, but proceed as follows: lie down flat on the back on the floor or on a board (not on a bed or a couch) and try to sink into the ground, as if it were soft. This will give you a luxurious feeling when you do it after physical exercise. Always relax before going to sleep.

The stretching and bending exercises are as follows: Each of them is to be repeated slowly several times, with concentrated thought. Stand with the heels together; raise the hands above the head; bend forward to touch the toes without bending the knees; return to the upright position, reaching as high as possible, standing on the toes. Stand as before; let the hands and arms rest straight down the sides, with the backs of the hands turned outwards from the knees; slowly raise the unbent arms outwards and upwards, until the backs of the hands touch above the head; stretch, rising on the toes and looking upwards; slowly return. Stand once more

with the hands at the sides; lean over slowly to one side until the hand sinks below the knee, while the other hand is curled up under the armpit; slowly swing back to the opposite side, stretching the body all the time. Perform all the exercises with an even movement and concentrated thought, for two minutes each. Finally stand, raise one foot from the floor by bending the knee; now raise the other and lower the first, and thus run as hard as you can for one minute, without moving along. In this exercise the two feet must not touch the ground at the same time. Now rest for three minutes before proceeding to the nerve exercises.

Nerve exercises are performed either by holding a part of the body still and preventing it from trembling, or by moving it very, very slowly. Hold out the hand with the fingers a little apart and watch the fingers intently. They move a little, and you begin to feel a kind of creaking inside the joints. Try to keep them perfectly still by an effort of the will. After a few minutes they begin to tingle, and you feel a leakage at the ends, as though something were going off. Send this back up the arm and into the body by the will. Next, stand before a large mirror, and move the arm by imperceptible degrees from the side into a horizontal position in front. It should move without any jerking, and so slowly that you can scarcely see it moving. Now sit with your back to the light, facing a large object, such as a wardrobe or a book-case. Without moving your head start at one corner of the object, and let your eyes move, without jumping, very slowly round the outline of it and along its prominent lines, back to the original point. These three exercises should take five minutes each.

Sit in your usual position for concentration. Draw the breath in slowly and evenly, through both nostrils, while mentally counting eight, or for five seconds; hold it in while counting eight; and breathe out slowly and evenly while counting eight. Repeat this twelve or fifteen times. While the breath is in the body it should not be held

with the throat muscles, but by holding the chest muscles out and the diaphragm down by an act of will. To cork the breath in at the throat is injurious. The whole process should be easy, pleasant and natural.

Follow this by gently drawing the lungs full of air, and then, holding the breath as before, press the breath down as low as possible in the body by sinking the diaphragm. Then press the air up into the chest (without raising or moving the shoulders), so that the abdomen goes in. Thus press the air up and down slowly and deliberately five or six times, and then slowly and gently breathe out. Repeat the whole process four times.

Thirdly, inhale the breath as before, press it down as low as possible, and draw in more air, so that both the lower and the upper parts of the lungs are filled tight. Then suck in and swallow more air through the mouth until you feel slight muscular discomfort. Release the air slowly from the chest first. Repeat this twice.

These breathing exercises are intended to make the body bright and cheerful, and to counteract the natural suspension of breath outside the body which often occurs during strong concentration of mind, as distinguished from the suspension of breath inside the body which accompanies physical effort. If carried on for too long at one time they tend to inhibit its sensibility. For the practice of concentration this, as also the practice of breathing with only one nostril, is not required.

Complete seclusion and quietude are not possible even for a short time. However fortunate you may be in your circumstances, you cannot escape entirely from light, sound and wind and other interruptions. This, however, need not matter much, if you train your senses to ignore the records of the sense organs. When we are deeply engrossed in a book we may be perfectly unaware that birds are singing outside and trees shaking and rustling in the wind, or that the fire is crackling on the

hearth and the clock ticking on the mantel-shelf, though these sounds are actually entering the ear and moving the sense organs. It is not that the ear does not respond to the sounds, but that the senses are turned away from the sense organs. So, also, the eyes may be open while we are in a "brown study," and nothing is seen though the retina contains the image of all things from which light waves are proceeding to the eye. If the clock suddenly stops, the attention is at once attracted to inquire about the unexpected change; so also if a large cloud suddenly obscures the sun, or a fresh, damp wind strikes the nostrils or the skin. These things would not attract the senses if we were not maintaining within the mind at least a little consciousness of outward things and interest in them.

The practice is sometimes followed of withdrawing attention from these by listening to sounds and attending to lights and feelings within the body. Such sounds as are set up by the movement of air in the ear and other cavities or by the circulation of the blood, or by other bodily phenomena, are unnoticed in the grosser sounds of life when we are attending to common affairs, but when we sit down silent and inattentive to outer impacts, these more delicate impressions may be found in consciousness. These may be chosen as objects of concentration, but, when they are not so chosen, attention should be turned from them, as from outside interruptions, to the object selected, and they should be forgotten.

It is a difficult matter to turn the senses away from the sense organs. Sit quietly and listen intently to the ticking of the clock. Then try not to hear it, first by an effort not to do so, and then by intent attention to something else. Again, try deliberately to confuse the sound by mixing it with others produced by your imagination, and in the confusion lose sight of the original sound.

But by far the best way to rid oneself of such interruptions is to select a place where as little interruption as possible can come, and then *remove* from the mind *all expectancy* or interest in outside changes. Sit down and consider, before beginning the morning's practice of concentration whether any physical phenomena concern you for the time being. Do you expect any one to call you or interrupt you? Do you fear that some one may surprise you in what may seem to the ignorant a ridiculous occupation? Even if you do, it is better to avoid expectancy. Do not be constantly on the listen for some one's coming. All such expectancy keeps the senses vividly attentive to the slightest sound. In short, resolve that during the time of practice any changes that may occur in the outer world do not concern you in the least, and that you will pay positively no attention to them. If there is an unusual sound cease to wonder what was the cause of it or what it means. Cease to take interest in outward changes and they will soon drop out of consciousness. If you have willed to be successful, you will not mind about outward things, or give an instant's thought to what foolish people may do or say.

CHAPTER V

METHODS OF OVERCOMING INTRUDING THOUGHTS

SOMETIMES when we are engaged in study or writing a visitor arrives who may be a welcome friend at any other time, but at the moment is a nuisance. So also when we are engaged in an attempt at concentration "visitors" throng in upon us, some welcome and others unwelcome. What is it that brings them here so inopportunely, and by what means can we persuade them to take their leave?

Now, a little study of these intruding thoughts will show you that they are largely concerned with considerations of self, and are linked to some emotion and memory in the mind. There is always a tendency for us to regard the things and persons that we meet in the light of how they affect our own lives, and, as long as this is so, feelings about them will invade our minds when we least require them. If Colonel Snuffamout is a jolly good fellow to all his companions at the Club, he is none the less a rank bully to his hapless subordinates, and any thought of him will arouse emotions of cordiality in the one case and of resentment in the other. These emotions in turn awaken their corresponding trains of thought. If I take a walk across the sands, I find the moving particles an insecure and disagreeable foothold; but doubtless the camel finds them indeed pleasant to the hoof. And so with all the events of life; each thing has its agreeable and its disagreeable aspects and the latter will end for you only when you have learned to use them all to further the purpose that you have chosen.

So long as you choose to regard other men and the events of life solely as they concern your own daily life

and feelings, so long will your mind be swept hither and thither by the winds that blow from everywhere. The mind will be surrounded by thoughts which habitually suggest emotions of anxiety, regret or resentment. These suggestions may be for the most part latent when you are engrossed in some physical work, or some mental activity which is kept to the point of having a physical basis, such as study or reading from books, or thinking in the course of conversation with others. But as soon as you turn away from active pursuits or study to engage in concentration, especially when no visible image or form is employed, you feel this press of thought which is then unwelcome. It is therefore desirable that you should weaken and destroy these associations which are so fruitful of mental and emotional agitation, by constantly regarding other people and things not as appendages of your own personal life; as providing you with occasions for resentment or self-gratulation, but rather as working out a destiny of their own in which you can help them or hinder them, as you will. In practice this means that you should form the habit of considering another man's actions, motives, words or conduct, *not* as they affect your own life and whatever you may be interested in, but as they affect *his* life and interests. In regarding him in this way you will be using him for your own perfecting also; for the unity of human life is such that each gains by doing good to others. But if you use him for outward gain you disobey the Great Law, your affections are against it and resentment and discontent will eat away your strength and peace.

This unselfish mode of life would prevent the accumulation of personal thoughts, and certainly concentration cannot be fully accomplished unless this is seriously undertaken. The states of mind during concentration and during the rest of the day react upon each other, and if you can thus to a large extent eliminate anxiety, greed, envy, jealousy, anger, fear, pride and irritability, it will be so much the better for your concentration.

If you have already said: I WILL, all this will be done, and your concentration will not be disturbed by such thoughts and feelings as these, which constitute the major part of the intruding thoughts that populate the spaces around you. If you have said: I WILL, you cannot wish any more; and if you find yourself wishing at any time you will know that you have not yet really willed. Proceed then to sort out the facts of your life; decide (1) what is your principal purpose in life, (2) what subordinate purposes are necessitated by duty, legitimate enjoyment and amusement, and weakness or by inclinations which you do not feel strong enough to subdue at present, (3) what things are in your power and to what extent they are so, and what are quite out of your power, (4) how those things that are in your power may be altered to suit your purpose, and how the other things also may be employed when they come your way. The first should be your one aim during the time dedicated to concentration of mind; the second constitutes the major portion of your every day life; the third should help you to carry out the other two calmly and sanely, so that you will not on the one hand strain at a weight which is beyond your strength, or on the other hand be depressed by obstacles which you are really able to overcome or to circumvent. Sit down in the morning and consider what things you are likely to meet with during the day. Make a list of them all, and of each one ask yourself the questions: Does it serve my principal purpose? Does it belong to my subordinate purposes? How far is it in my power for alteration or for use? What use can I make of it? And when the day is done go over the same list again, and ask yourself of each item: Have I made use of this for my principal purpose or a subordinate one? How far was it in my power? What use did I make of it?

So, when you are sitting down to begin your daily practice, ask yourself the question: What am I about to do? And answer point by point: I am going to do so-and-so. Then I am going to do so-and-so. Then ask: Why am

I about to do so-and-so? And answer: For such-and-such a purpose. Secondly think: What are the duties of my everyday life? Enumerate them briefly, and then clearly formulate the idea: I have no concern with these during my period of concentration. Finally think: What thoughts are likely to disturb me during this period? Mr. Ponsonby spoke ill of me; my son disobeyed me; my father misunderstood me; I lost some money; somebody robbed me; I fear that I shall lose my appointment; I want to have a smoke or a drink or to chew something; I wish it wasn't so hot or so cold; I wonder if I shall gain such-and-such a thing; how can I let my superior officer become aware of my many virtues; I wish my wife or my child were not ailing; O, when shall I succeed? I wonder if I am making progress; I wish these flies wouldn't bother me; or, in short, why did God make things as they are, and why doesn't He carry out the improvements I have to suggest? Let them all come forward in review. Do not aggravate them by hasty and angry rebuff, but say to each in turn, quietly, "Good morning, Sir; I hope you are well. No doubt your business is very pressing. I shall attend to it seriously and fully during the day, and endeavour to give you the most complete satisfaction; but for the next hour I am otherwise engaged. Good morning." Treated thus politely the visitors will feel constrained to bow themselves out in silence. They will feel that you have made room for them in ordering your life and, on the small pension of thought that you accord them during the day, will live peaceably until they die.

The intruding thoughts of this class which come to disturb you during your efforts at concentration are very numerous, and if any one of them persists in coming in, pause to give it a moment's consideration. Say to it: "Come, don't interrupt me now. I will attend to you at five o'clock this afternoon," and keep the appointment, and think it *out*. If it still persists, consider whether it has to do with a matter which is in your power or not.

If it is in your power, decide to do something to settle it. If you have done all that you can or if it is not in your power to settle it, decide finally that it has no concern with you and you will think of it no more.

(There is another class of intruders, which appears to come telepathically from other minds and from the objects around us. In these days of wireless telegraphy there need be no difficulty in believing that thoughts coming from other minds influence ours: and we have already remarked how our own habitual thoughts hang about us when we are busily engaged, and discharge themselves upon us in our moments of quiet. It is no wonder that the mind, subject to such bombardment, tosses like a boat on a lake in a storm, and that it should seem to the practitioner at first that the more he strives to control the mind the more it plunges.

In many cases intruders of this second class do not excite particular personal emotions. Words, numbers, pictures, ideas intelligible or unintelligible, come drifting before the mind; and often they have no connection with the incidents, purposes or emotions that govern our daily lives. They come from the things round about us, and from other persons. If the concentration is active and the mind kept vigorously working, these drifting thoughts will come and go, and though they may be seen floating past, they will not be anchored to the attention. If you find that any such drifting thought becomes insistent and persistent, you will also find that you are taking a personal interest in it, and some impatience, irritation, disappointment or anxiety has arisen. In this case the drifting thought has found a relative sleeping in your mind and has awakened it into activity. It should then be treated as an intruder of the first class. You should become so calm mentally that, while your attention is bent upon one thing, you can merely notice the pictures drifting past without paying any attention to them. Later on, after you gain by practice the re-

quired calm and concentration, it will be worth while to examine such pictures in detail; but at the present stage any effort to do so would only divert your attention.

If at first you do not feel that you can remain indifferent to these drifting thoughts, you may reduce them by the following and similar external devices: Keep for the practice a room which is used for no other purpose. Keep it clean yourself; do not send servants in to handle things. Gradually the room will become a haven into which you may retreat for shelter from the storms of life. Sit in the middle of the room, and place before you a picture or an image or a symbol, if you have no objection to such forms of any Being whom you worship such as a picture of Christ or of Shri Krishna or, if you choose, of any great man, living or dead, whom you wish to grow like. Sit with your back to the window, leaving your ordinary clothes outside. Put on a special garment, preferably of linen or cotton, before going into the room. Do not take into the room money or a pocket-knife or keys, and keep a special watch or little clock, pencil and paper there. Money especially is psychically unclean. Let the feet be bare if it is not too cold, and well washed before you enter. It is best to sluice the body and limbs with cold water also. All this will keep you from immediate contact with emanations from objects which have been much handled by other people, or used in the business of life, and also form a wall against drifting thoughts. Do not talk to anybody about what you are doing. Secrecy, or rather silence, is of positive value in all these practices. If people are thinking about what you are doing, their thoughts will tend to come in and disturb you. But nearly all of this is quite unnecessary, and absolutely so if you have really said: I WILL. Yet at all times and in all cases you will do well to preserve scrupulous cleanliness and a considerable amount of silence.

CHAPTER VI

CONCENTRATION

WE have spoken of the fish of attention, and in our practice of Recall we have seen it swimming round and round a selected idea. Before it was trained in that way probably you used to let it wander from cat to hearth-rug, from hearth-rug to factory, from factory to something else, and so on in a perpetual zigzag course. Whenever you wanted to think out a problem or a plan of any kind perhaps it went through a course something like this, in passing from the problem A to the conclusion B, if indeed it ever arrived there at all:



This is indeed the most common variety of "thinking." As an example of it let us listen for a moment to the words of Mrs. Nickleby on the subjects of Stratford-on-Avon and roast pig as recorded by the immortal Dickens:

I think there must be something in the place, for, soon after I was married, I went to Stratford with my poor dear Mr. Nickleby, in a post-chaise from Birmingham—was it a post-chaise though? Yes, it must have been a post-chaise, because I recollect remarking at the time that the driver had a green shade over his left eye;—in a post-chaise from Birmingham, and after we had seen Shakespeare's tomb and birthplace we went back to the inn there, where we slept that night, and I recollect that all night long I dreamt of nothing but a black gentleman, at full length, in plaster-of-Paris, with a lay-down collar tied with two tassels, leaning against a post and thinking; and when I woke in the morning and described him to Mr. Nickleby, he said it was Shakespeare just as he had been when he was alive, which was very curious indeed. Stratford—Stratford. Yes, I am positive about that, because I recollect I was in the family way with my son Nicholas at the time, and I had been very much frightened by an Italian image boy that very morning. In fact, it was quite a mercy, ma'am, that my son didn't turn out to be a Shakespeare, and what a dreadful thing that would have been!

Roast pig; let me see. On the day five weeks after you were christened, we had a roast—no, that couldn't have been a pig, either, because I recollect there were a pair of them to carve, and your poor papa and I could never have thought of sitting down to two pigs—they must have been partridges. Roast pig! I hardly think we ever could have had one, now I come to remember, for your papa could never bear the sight of them in the shops, and used to say that they always put him in mind of very little babies, only the pigs had much fairer complexions: and he had a horror of little babies, too, because he couldn't very well afford any increase to his family and had a natural dislike to the subject. It's very odd now, what can have put that in my head! I recollect dining once at Mrs. Bevan's, in that broad street round the corner by the coachmaker's where the tipsy man fell through the cellar flap of an empty house nearly a week before the quarter-day and wasn't found till the new tenant went in—and we had roast pig there. It must be that, I think, that reminds me of it, especially as there was a little bird in the room that would keep on singing all the time of dinner—at least, not a little bird, for it was a parrot, and he didn't sing exactly, for he talked and swore dreadfully; but I think it must be that. Indeed I am sure it must.

Do you still find yourself in the Mrs. Nickleby stage of mental development, or have you succeeded in stopping this process of rambling thought, and making your thoughts go round and round a definite subject, so that when the little fish loses sight of the object which you have chosen it realises its error at once, and returns? If so, the next practice that you need to do is one that will make the fish go in a straight line from A to B, from where you are to the object that you have fixed upon in the distance. Once more the process is analogous to physical plane sight and movement. You have before you an idea which you are trying to reach or clarify, or a problem which you are trying to solve, and you drive steadily towards your goal until you have gained your end.

Exercise 2. Sit down in your room and look round it carefully, noting all the little things which it contains. Now close your eyes and make all those things go before your mind in imagination, till the whole procession has passed by. If you know an alphabet of foreign forms

such as the Devanagari, the Arabic or the Russian, make the letters pass one by one in procession before your imagination until the whole series is complete. Perhaps

you will say that this is easy ; and indeed that is so.

Now sit down once more, and take a walk, in imagination, along a familiar road or street, noticing all the details that you can remember as you slowly pass them by, and coming back in the same way until you arrive at the place where you are. Take a new walk in this way every day for a week, and every time that the little fish wanders from the path that you have chosen for your walk, make it come back again and begin the walk over again from the very beginning. Thus you train it to follow a line or series of definite images not chosen by itself.

Exercise 3. Pass on from this exercise to another in which you once more take a journey, but this time, instead of passing along a familiar street or lane, pass again through some previous experience that you have had, and let it occur before your eyes in panoramic form. Suppose, for example, you have risen one morning, had breakfast, driven to the station, conversed with Mr. Brown in the train that took you up to town, arrived at your office, read your morning correspondence, and so forth through all the general incidents of the daily round. Try to live it over again as perfectly as possible, and, as regards at least one small portion, even in detail. If the little fish wanders away, bring it back, and make it begin again at the beginning. Do this every day for a week.

Exercise 4. Next proceed to a third stage in this practice, in which you try to keep your thoughts in a fixed line of activity. Decide upon some particular sight or sound that is before you, say the ticking of the clock. Ask yourself : what is the cause of that ? It is due to the swinging of the pendulum and the movement of the spring and wheels. But what causes all these ? Now try

to run back along a series of images following the clock back in its wanderings to see how it was placed in position, how it travelled to where it is, where it came from, how its parts were put together and made, where and by whom, how its materials were procured, in fact imagining all that has contributed to make it what it is. It does not matter very much whether your imaginings in this practice are right or wrong, but it does matter that your mind should run through a long series of coherent imaginings without once missing the point. Each day for one week follow in imagination the course of life of something about you, without once letting the fish wander away to other things.

Exercise 5. Now go out for a walk in imagination, as you did before, along some familiar way, but on coming to a selected building or scene stop dead and examine it. Try to picture it in all its details without wandering away or going on. This is distinctly a difficult thing to do just at first, and if you find that the mind begins to tug violently in its efforts to get away, move about into different positions every few moments and try to picture the scene from these different points of view; but as soon as you are tired return to where you are. You will probably find, to your surprise, that you know practically nothing of the details of the buildings or the scenes with which you thought yourself perfectly familiar. You therefore need some practice in mind-painting. Look carefully at the wall of the room in which you sit, notice all the marks upon it, the objects that are fixed upon it or are standing against it, the form, size and proportions of every feature connected with it. Now shut your eyes and try to picture the whole at once. You will find your image hazy and indefinite. Imagine then each small part of it alone in turn, and you will see how much clearer these are. Picture to yourself the figure of a man. You will find it a little hazy, but when you look at one small portion of the image that part will become clear while the rest will tend to disappear. If you make

the hands or feet clear, the head will have vanished; if you make the head clear, the lower part of the body will have gone. Whatever may be the image that you examine in this manner, some parts of it will elude you, and when you look at one portion the others will grow faint or even disappear.

There is a reason for this. Your attention is like a lamp. If it is shining upon a small area it will illuminate that area well; but if it is spread over a large field of attention all the objects within it will be comparatively dim. We may thus speak of intensity and extensy with reference to our power of attention. If the attention is allowed to extend over a large field the intensity of it is at once reduced, while if the area is reduced the intensity is increased. We therefore need two sets of exercises, one in which the attention is narrowed and therefore intensified, and the other in which an effort is made to retain this increased intensity while the attention is gradually extended over a larger field. Even a small mind can often do one thing well; even the animal mind can bring one narrow virtue to a high degree of perfection, as in the case of the faithfulness of a dog; but what we require to develop is a large mind which can grasp a great deal at once and yet deal perfectly decisively with the whole. Thus we shall gain in time a powerful control over a large field of varied interests. It is well, however, not to attempt great expansion until the mind has a strong grasp of the little things or the few. One notices herein the cause of the failure that is written upon the life of nearly every person who is "educated" beyond his strength; he loses his capacity for seeing things clearly with his own eyes and dealing decisively with unexpected situations, though often he may have gained a certain amount of surface knowledge and polish that passes muster in the world. In a short career as a schoolmaster I have seen many boys "educated" beyond their strength, and in the horrid grind of our wicked educational system have seen some of them go through their

Matriculation cursed for life. If we could only somehow grow up with our minds as clear and our ideas as vivid as those of children how blessed we should be. It is indeed true that a University education often "polishes pebbles and dulls diamonds," as a great writer once said.

Proceed then as follows with your experiments. Take a picture of a man—a great and good man whom you sincerely admire—place it before you and examine one stroke of the artist's pencil or brush at the centre of the face, say at the point between the eyes. Close the eyes and picture that stroke clearly before the mind. Repeat this several times, until you can at once form it perfectly clearly. Now take another stroke near to the first; and fix this also firmly in the imagination. Next imagine the two strokes together. Compare your image with the original at every stroke, and so go on working patiently until you can produce quite perfectly, say, an eye or the nose. So go on, adding stroke by stroke, until you have the whole of the face clearly in your mind and you can picture it completely in the smallest detail without great effort. This is the work of many hours, as every stroke must be produced with accuracy. In one sitting you may succeed in reproducing one feature, and it will take at least a week to complete the whole portrait. If you thus do just one portrait perfectly, you will find an immense gain in your mental power. Practice this mind-painting method for a fortnight, producing only one good portrait.

Exercise 6. You may now turn with advantage to the practice of expanding the attention. First take up a picture of anything pleasant and agreeable. In India we have many delightful pictures of the different forms of the Deity which are much used in different kinds of meditation. For example, there is a pleasant little picture of Shri Krishna, the Lord of Love, as a boy seated on a rock, playing His flute, while in the background the happy cows graze on the bank of a peaceful river, beyond which a range of tree-clad hills protectively encloses the

gentle scene. Take such a picture as this; examine it carefully; close your eyes and reproduce it in imagination. Now begin to narrow down the view, and observe how much clearer the scene becomes as you diminish its extent. First drop the clouds and the mountains in the background, then the trees and the river and the cows which are grazing by it, and so on, little by little, until you have nothing left but the form of the boy. Go on slowly in the same way, making the image clearer and clearer as it grows smaller until you have lost the rock and have left only the upper part of the body, the head and the face, and at last only the face with the wonderful eyes.

Hold that clear image for a moment, and then begin to expand it again, trying to keep the whole as clear as the small piece to which you had contracted it and as you build up the entire picture again, point by point make every effort to retain the definiteness for the complex unit which you were able to secure for one small portion of it. When you have practiced this exercise for a week pass on to the next.

Exercise 7. Place some pleasant and familiar object, such as a fancy box, a clock, a small chair or a candle-stick, in front of you, two or three feet away from where you are sitting, preferably in the middle of the room. After examining it, close your eyes and imagine it clearly from the position where you are, as you would look at it. The image will thus be flat, like a picture. Now imagine the thing from the back, not by turning it round in your imagination, but by transferring your consciousness to a point on the opposite wall. Imagine yourself to be sitting where you are, but against the opposite wall, looking at the object from the opposite side. Once more form a picture, this time of what we should usually call the back of the object. When you have both images well made, from the front and the back try to imagine them together, as though you were looking at the object:

from both sides at once. To do this effectively you will need to get rid of the idea that you are facing the object from one point of view, and imagine yourself as on both sides of it, regarding it from both directions at once.

Now take up the same object for a further practice. Imagine yourself to be looking down upon it from above. For this purpose, transfer your consciousness into the ceiling. Then bring your consciousness down, and go carefully and slowly round the object at a little distance, observing it from every point of view. Next get your consciousness down into the floor and observe the thing from underneath. And, finally by going through all these circumambulations of consciousness one after another with increasing rapidity, try to blend all the images that you have gained from the different points of view, and grasp the thing as it really appears without reference to your position with regard to it. This is, of course, a difficult thing to do; but remember in this exercise you are not expected to do the thing perfectly, but only to try. Practice it to the best of your ability for a week.

Exercise 8. Take up now a simple object, such as a box of matches. Examine it; open it and inspect the interior carefully; place it before you; close your eyes and imagine it from every point of view. Now imagine the interior also, and try to hold all these ideas or images of the object at the same time in your consciousness. Transfer your consciousness into the middle of it, and look at it from that point. Then expand your consciousness gradually until you are no longer a point in the middle of the object, but have become a large ball with the object in the middle of you. Continue this practice for a week with different objects such as a flower, a fruit, a cocoanut, a glass of water, and your own head.

Exercise 9. You will now find that you are able to call up images far more easily than you could before, and that the mind no longer wanders away so wilfully as it

used to do. The next step is to make a series of experiments in calling up images bodily and complete before the mind. For this purpose you will probably find at first that repetition of the name of the object is necessary. Suppose that you have been using a picture, such as that of Shri Krishna, in one of the foregoing exercises. Now, with your eyes closed, look into empty space and mentally call out the name of Shri Krishna, repeating it again and again, and trying to discern the form. Suddenly it will spring up before your mental vision, and the complete picture will present itself in idea or in form. Do this again and again each day for a week, until you can call up images and keep them a little while by the constant repetition of a word.

You will find it a great help in making a mental picture to see that all the details within it are congruous with one another. For example, you might picture a London omnibus drawn by two horses, but if you attempt to imagine it being drawn by two cows you will find the matter much more difficult. It is not possible to hold two disconnected images or ideas before the mind at the same time. But it is possible to grasp the two at once if the main focus of attention is something which includes both at the same time, or something common to both. I can picture a cow and a horse together by centering the attention on their common characteristic and thinking of both as animals. I can picture a horse and a cart together because they occur together in common experience as a unit having a single purpose. I can picture a cart and an omnibus together because of their common characteristic. But it would be comparatively difficult to hold together the ideas of a cow and an omnibus, because one belongs properly to the streets of a busy town and the other to the quiet pastures of the countryside. The mind would tend to run from one to the other losing sight of each alternately. If, however, some common relationship were discovered and made the centre of attention the two ideas would rapidly cling together, in-

stead of repelling each other by their incongruity. It is useful therefore to find the idea which makes the group really a unit, and make that the centre of the complex image. It is the abstract that binds the varied concrete images together.

Exercise 10. You should now make an effort to think in images, without the use of words. Endeavour to recall and *know* things without naming or describing them in words. Very often we *feel* that we do not *know* a thing until we have succeeded in recalling its name or verbal description, though its appearance and qualities may be quite familiar. Thinking in words is thinking in symbols, and in it there is much danger of missing the truth, for it is easily possible to manipulate and rearrange the symbols in a manner to which the facts would not conform. In dealing with the higher mystic perceptions and occult researches we shall often be without the aid of arbitrary symbolic words, and have to think in the realities themselves, so that thinking and experiencing will at last become indistinguishable. As an elementary practice of this, let the following ideas form a succession of thought in form, without words: horse, cow, milk, moonlight, moon, sun. Picture a horse trying not to think of the name of it. Now if you drop the picture and then call up the image of a cow you will have to think the word "cow" between the two. This is the usual process in the chain of thought: name (horse), form (horse), name (horse), name (cow), form (cow), name (cow), name (milk), form (milk), name (milk), and so on, the picture being blotchy like that of a very bad cinematograph. In this practice, however, the names must be left out, and the picture must undergo a continuous, gradual change in which there is a constant modification of the form, but no unintentional obliteration of it. Having pictured the horse clearly, begin to modify it piecemeal. Let the contour of the back, the slope of the neck, the shape of the body, the form of the legs and hoofs, the tail, the setting of the head, and other details gradually change, from

those of a horse to those of a cow until the transition is complete. Then proceed to concentrate the attention on the milk which comes from the cow, and *gradually* lose sight of the cow's head, tail, body, legs and other parts, until only the stream or vessel of milk is seen. Make this now undergo a gradual change. Thin out the liquid stream, letting it lose its definite outline and opacity, but retaining the colour, though making it paler, and to this nebulous stream add outline and surroundings until you have a stream of moonlight on dark water or a forest glade. Hold this before the attention for a moment. Trace the moonlight to the moon in the dark sky, adding this to the picture. Now drop the forest glade or the dark sea point by point and let your attention run up the ray of moonlight to the moon itself. Gradually change this form. Let its outline remain but expand and its colour change until you have the great golden-red ball of the rising or the setting sun. Carry the practice on very slowly, repeating it daily for a week.

Perhaps you will think that these practices of concentration involve too great an effort. It is not so. Think of the efforts that you made as a child when learning to write, how long it took you to gain control of your hand and pen. That was a greater effort than this, for, however much the mind may seem to plunge about, remember it is made of far more yielding and plastic stuff than is your arm or hand, and is therefore easier to control. Indeed, if you will, it is easier to learn to control the mind than it is to write. Think, again, of the vast number of exercises a violinist will practice to render his fingers supple, obedient and expert. Give the same, or far less, effort to mind-control and you will become master of your instrument.

CHAPTER VII

MAIN POINTS OF PRACTICE

SUCCESS depends upon what you seek and how you seek. If you have said you will succeed in anything, you will, provided that your will is in accord with the Great Law. If it is not, and if what you seek is the idle satisfaction of the body, or of the senses, or even of the mind, you cannot really say you will, for you are the slave of the pleasures of the lower life, and you will be drawn wherever the objects of the senses may lead. But if you say, I will have power, I will have love, I will have knowledge, remember you must choose the right way to seek it, and see that others also are more powerful and freer because you are so, that they have more love because you have much to give, that they have more knowledge because it has come to you. If in pride you hold and withhold power, in order to feel your supremacy over others, you are not obeying the Great Law, you are a slave to the base emotion of pride. If in your seeking of knowledge you do so in order to shine and be superior, you are not obeying the Great Law, you are a slave to the base emotion of pride. If you seek the love of others for yourself, that they may think well of you and speak highly of you and be drawn to seek your company, once more you are disobeying the Great Law and you are a slave to the base emotion of pride. And your pride, when it is thwarted by the "accidents" of life, will be turned into envy and jealousy and anger and hate and fear, and you will be torn by the conflicting winds of circumstance, you will be drowned in the ocean of wishes, and you cannot say: I WILL.

Even more will this be so if you seek the satisfaction of the senses or the luxuries of the body; then indeed

will you be a slave of the senses. Surely *then* you cannot will ; but presently you will be corrupted with wishes and regrets like a leper with the pustules of a foul disease, and there will be no peace and no power within you. Indeed, you must train all your vehicles, your body, your feelings and your mind, to *orderly activity*, removing from them all traces of sloth and heaviness, agitation and excitement of every kind, so that they will be perfect instruments for carrying out your will in the regions in which they work. It is said in an old Indian book of Yoga that there are four great enemies to human success : a sleepy heart, human passions, a confused mind, and attachment to anything but Brahman ; and by what is there called Brahman we mean the Great Law.

A sleepy heart—that means that the body is lazy and luxurious, its activities are slothful or else ill-regulated and over-excited. Human passions—that means that the senses or emotions are enervated and ill-regulated in their action. A confused mind—that also means that the mind is still sluggish or incoherent and uncontrolled. And, in mastering all these, what must you do ? In each case you must not aim at destruction ; you must aim at perfectly well-regulated activity.

Physical culture involves the suppression of irregular activities in the body. It demands an ordered life, with regular and well-proportioned exercise, nourishment and rest. The governing of the natural appetites which it requires does not nullify their power, but tunes them up ; and the sense of vigorous life is increased, not diminished, by its control. These things are true also of the mind. It also requires regular and well-proportioned exercise, nourishment and rest. Its natural appetites also need to be controlled and governed, and when this is done there is no loss of mental vigour, but an enhancement of it.

Exercise is something more than the mere use of faculty. A man breaking stones on the road is using his

muscles and certainly in a long time the muscles he uses become strong. A man who carries out a definite system of physical exercise for a short time every day soon becomes stronger than the man who wields the hammer all day long. So, also, a man who spends his time in the study of mathematics, literature, languages, science, philosophy, or any other subject, is using his mind, and thinking may become facile to him. But a man who deliberately carries out a definite system of mental exercise for a short time every day soon gains greater control of his mind than he who merely reads and cursorily thinks all day long.

In fact, the need of mental training, of regular, orderly, purposeful exercise of the mind, is far greater than that of the body in most cases; for at our stage of growth most of our bodily activities are well-ordered and controlled, and the body is obedient to our will, but our minds are usually utterly disobedient, idle and luxurious.

In the fourth chapter of this book various exercises for the body have been prescribed. These are intended to regulate and calm it. Calmness does not mean dullness or immobility. It means regular motion and is quite compatible with rapid motion. So also control of mind does not mean dullness or stupidity. It means very clear-cut and regular thought, velocity and strength of mind vivid and living ideas. It is the opposite of drunkenness and mental debauchery.

Now, without the preliminary training which makes the body calm, control of mind becomes very, very difficult. A certain small measure of austerity is imperatively necessary for great success in concentration. The reason for this is to be discovered in the basic rule of the process. That rule is this: the *body* must be *still*, the *mind alert*. People usually employ their mental energy only in the service of the physical body, and in connection with it. The mental flow is unobstructed and think-

ing is easy when there is a physical leading, as, for example, in reading a book. Argumentation is easy when each step is fixed in writing, or thought is stimulated by conversation. A game of chess is easy when we see the board; but to play it blindfold is a more difficult matter. The habit of thinking only in association with bodily activity and stimulus is so great generally that a special effort of thought is usually accompanied by wrinkling of the brows, tightening of the lips, and muscular, nervous and functional disorders. The dyspepsia of scientific men is almost proverbial. A child when learning anything displays the most astonishing contortions. A boy learning to write follows the movement of his pen with his tongue.

This must be stopped, in the practice of concentration. A high degree of mental concentration is positively injurious to the body unless this stoppage is at least partially done. Muscular and nervous tension are not concentration of mind, and success in the exercise is not necessarily marked by any bodily sensation or feeling whatever. A tightness between the eyebrows is not concentration, and further, concentration on such a feeling is not usually beneficial. Control of mind is *not* brought about by fervid effort of any kind, any more than a handful of water can be held by a violent grasp. Control of mind is brought about by *constant, quiet, calm practice and avoidance of emotional agitation and excitement.*

Constant, quiet, calm *practice* means regular periodical practice for a long time. The time given at one sitting may be five minutes or fifty. The quality of the work is more important than the quantity. Five minutes well done spells progress and achievement. Fifty minutes negligently done does not. The periods may be once, twice or three times a day. Once done well means progress; three times indifferently does not. But the exercise should be done at least once every day, and always be-

fore relaxation and pleasure, not afterwards. It should be done as early in the day as is practicable, not postponed until easier and more pleasurable duties have been fulfilled. Some strictness of rule is necessary, and this is best imposed by ourselves upon ourselves.

Determined perseverance does not usually walk hand in hand with absence of excitement in human life. Yet for success the mind must be calm and free from wishes, which always bring exciting desires, fear, doubt, expectancy, pleasurable and painful feelings and thoughts. The ideal aimed at should be clearly pictured in the mind, and then kept constantly before it. Such a prevailing mood will tend to polarise all thought, desire and activity to its direction. As a traveller may follow a star through mazes of forest and trackless country; so will the persistent ideal guide its votary infallibly through all difficult and complex situations in life. All that is necessary is *constant practice* and *absence of agitation*.

Constant practice and absence of excitement or agitation—these two rules are always prescribed; and do you not see that they are the natural accompaniments of will? If you have said: I WILL, not only in words but also in act and thought and feeling, will you not always be using your powers to gain your end, always be free from the excitement that attends upon wishing? If you want a light, says an Indian proverb, what is the good of merely talking about a lamp? If you are sick, says another, can you cure your disease simply by calling out the names of medicines? Hidden treasure does not reveal itself by your simply commanding "Come out!" You must find the place, remove the stones and dig.

And if thus you work and practice, and never wish, and have no attachment to anything but Brahman, then success will soon be yours, and power and love and knowledge will be yours of which the king upon his throne, the impassioned lover with his mistress, and the scholar in his study do not even dream. For the Great

Law is the source of all power, of all knowledge and of all love, and when your consciousness is not attached to anything but Brahman, success will be yours now and all the time. In the distant future, do you say? Is it not sure?

Behold, I show you Truth! Lower than hell
Higher than Heaven, outside the utmost stars,
Farther than Brahm doth dwell,

Before Beginning, and without an end,
As space eternal and as surely sure,
Is fixed a Power divine which moves to good,
Only its laws endure.¹

And what is sure is just the same as if it had already happened, and if you will not have it otherwise, even now success is yours. And when the vehicles are no longer your master, and you are no longer the servant of the body and the slave of the senses, you will have no attachment to anything but the Great Law, and to live in that, and share its power, its bliss and its wisdom will be the power and love and knowledge that you shall enjoy. And all who are under the Law, and there is none who is not, will profit exceedingly.

To know Brahman, seek within yourself, with the help of one who has sought and found before you, for there are Those who know and can teach. Obey the Law and keep an open mind, strive always to recognise the Law in others, strive by meditation to understand the nature of that which is within you, above you and beyond.

¹ The Light of Asia.

CHAPTER VIII

METHODS OF MEDITATION

If you now pass on from the practices of concentration to those of meditation your object may be any of three. It may be to raise your consciousness to include normally more of the higher and subtler things, so that abstract thoughts and finer feelings may more and more occupy your mind. It may be to call down a blessing from higher spheres of life, or to rise in aspirational devotion into the presence of the Divine. It may be to develop your character, and fix within it qualities which you intend it to express, by striving to understand those qualities, dwelling upon them in thought and picturing to yourself the manner in which they would affect your life if they were yours.

Let us take the last first, for of it there is little here to say, as it belongs properly to the subject of character-building, and that is fully explained in my book on that subject. We will take only one example, the quality of harmlessness.

Exercise 11. Sit down and think what harmlessness means. There must be harmlessness in act, so that none is injured; harmlessness in speech, so that no wounding word is spoken, so that no evil or unkind reports are spread abroad, so that nothing is said about another which might prejudice opinion against him, or will be misconstrued against him, so that nothing is said which will lead another to act unwisely or misunderstand; harmlessness in thought, so that none may receive unkind or base impressions from the emanations of your mind, so that none will be inspired to error or wrong by your thought, so that you will not be let into harsh judgments or unkind criticism. How would you find

this harmlessness expressed in the lives of great persons whom you admire, or in the actions, the thoughts and the words of the Master? How would you refrain from harmfulness if you were standing in His presence? How would this virtue affect your own daily life, when you meet some person whom you have not liked, when you encounter some disagreeable incident, when some one stands in your way or tries to injure you, when things do not go as you think they ought to do? How would you treat those you love if you had this virtue, so as not to rob them in any way of the freedom which love so often fears?

Thus, and in many other ways, you would meditate upon the quality of harmlessness, and afterwards carry with you into daily life a state of mind that would soon express itself in all your actions and thoughts. Thus you would continue with quality after quality, working steadily at the building of character, and you would find your life wonderfully changed in the course of a few months of earnest effort.

Let us turn now to the subject of raising your consciousness to a higher level, to a state in which it will better comprehend the higher thought and the finer feelings. This will naturally require different methods, according as you seek the one or the other. If you seek to understand the higher feelings you will need to turn your feelings upwards, as it were, to some one who is above you and greater than you. This will involve an elementary act of worship. But if you intend to work rather along the line of thought, then you will proceed by an attempt to grasp the essence of ideas, and make quite clear and definite that level of your consciousness which is still nebular. We will consider the devotional method first.

Exercise 12. Select your ideal, the object of your worship, and take care when you do so that there is nothing in it that you in any way doubt or fear. Let

it be one which you can fully trust and never question at all, for to besmirch the mind with a deity who needs glossing over, polishing or veneering, is to prostitute the loftiest human faculty, the power of worship, to the base uses of worldly hopes and fears. When you have decided upon a suitable object make an image of it before your mind, fix your attention upon it, and allow your thought to play upon it with an uninterrupted flow, so that as you dwell upon it from different aspects it constantly awakens your admiration.

The Deity figured as Donor will call up gratitude, which should be allowed to well up within, unreservedly and unconditionally; as Creator, Father, Protector, King, His mystery and majesty will awaken glad awe, trustfulness and hope; as Saviour, His compassion will excite self-sacrifice; as Eternal Sacrifice, His omnipresence will engender sympathy with all.

Knowing the value of this method the Hindus have long lists of qualities, enumerating the virtues of the Divine Being. There is some danger, however, when so many forms are taken, of repeating mere words, without realising and feeling the effect of each one as fully as possible. Mere repetition of vaguely understood words and phrases will only produce a kind of mental and moral hypnotism. Ponder upon the quality as manifest in the form that is selected for meditation, and take the quality in all its aspects and relationships. At the outset a set of questions may be used to stimulate the thought, but when that is made clear, pondering and dwelling upon it, and viewing it in different lights are necessary. Such questions are: Why does the divine One possess and show this quality—let us say fearlessness? How? To whom? When? In what degree? In what manner? With what effect? A list of qualities can easily be extracted from any book of divine praise of any religion. One such quality is quite enough for several sittings.

I find the preparation for this process so beautifully drawn in an old Samskrit book that I cannot refrain from offering a translation of the passage. By such a process of imagination a man may withdraw himself from the depressing suggestions of a dingy room, wrapping himself first in a scene of beauty and peace, and then enjoying therein quiet contemplation of a beloved form.

Let him find in his heart a broad ocean of nectar,
 Within it a beautiful island of gems,
 Where the sands are bright golden and sprinkled with jewels,
 Fair trees line its shores with a myriad of blooms,
 And within it rare bushes, trees, creepers and rushes,
 On all sides shed fragrance most sweet to the sense.

Who would taste of the sweetness of divine completeness
 Should picture therein a most wonderful tree,
 On whose far-spreading branches grow fruit of all fancies—
 The four mighty Teachings that hold up the world.
 There the fruit and the flowers know no death and no sorrows,
 While to them the bees hum and soft cuckoos sing.

Now, under the shadow of that peaceful arbour
 A temple of rubies most radiant is seen.
 And he who shall seek there will find on a seat rare
 His dearly Beloved enshrined therein,
 Let him dwell with his mind, as his Teacher defines,
 On that Divine Form, with His modes and His signs.

A Christian would generally select as his personal object the Christ amid the scenes of the gospel story. If a symbol is used an endeavour should be made to account, in as many ways as are consistently possible, for all details of its form and colour. If music or song is used, once more an effort should be made to account for the notes separately and in relation. Most people will, however, prefer a visible, to an audible, image in this meditation.

We shall now turn to the intellectual form of meditation. It consists first in an endeavour to realise what the object is and what is its relation to other objects. The

stream of thought should play upon the object so as to understand it in all its natural, superphysical and metaphysical aspects. Thought is essentially concerned with the invisible. It is, however, another kind of seeing, which, when it becomes predominant in the character, is quite as satisfying and certain as natural or physical seeing. We cannot see the square root of two with our eyes; yet its existence is a fact. We cannot see the elements of mathematical form with our eyes, we *do see* them with our thought.

Exercise 13. Select a difficult or abstract subject, such as the idea of harmony. Fix your thought upon it. Begin by asking questions about it. What is the selected idea? Name it. Give some concrete examples of it, such as harmony in music and the harmonic motion of pendulums. See to what senses these examples apply. Go over them in detail and observe their qualities for sensation. What is the class of the idea? What are its prominent features? In what does it resemble and in what does it differ from other similar or contrasting ideas? What is its real nature and why does it exist? What part does it play in the succession of events? From what does it rise and to what does it lead? When you have answered to some extent all these questions, picture the several concrete images together, trying to grasp their common element of harmony. Then try to hold this abstract thought of harmony, while you drop the concrete images.

Think of a number of colours; red, yellow, green, blue and violet. Notice that these are all distinct and quite different sensations. What do you see? You see red, yellow, green, blue and violet. But you do not see colour, as such. Fix upon two colours, say red and green. Concentrate upon them. What have they in common? Certainly not much as regards their superficial appearance. There is, however, a relation between them, something which is common to them both. It is colour. Try to

understand what colour is. Drop the images and the thought of red and green, and try to keep hold of the conception of colour without them. Next fix the thought upon heat and cold. We are sensible of different degrees of warmth or coldness, but we have no direct sensation of heat as such. Try, out of these two ideas, to conceive of heat as such. Cling to the conception that you thus obtain while you drop the ideas of different degrees of heat. Again, colour and heat are two forms of sensation. What is it that these have in common? The idea of sensation. Try to grasp this, while you drop the ideas of colour and heat. In this practice it is not enough to define the things logically in words by their generic and differentiating marks. They must be pondered upon and looked into with a kind of mental feeling, and then an effort must be made to grasp and hold the abstract idea without any sense of form or of naming.

Exercise 14. Now, take up for further practice a series of difficult questions, such as: What is truth? What is spirit? What is justice? Avoid giving mere verbal definitions, but try to realise these things mentally. Take up any difficult passages in a book of deep thought or of mysticism. Follow reason in trying to elucidate them, and when you can reason no further, still do not let the thought wander away. Keep the thought there, at the highest point that you have been able to reach, and wait for the inspiration that will surely come.

There remains but one more form of meditation that we need consider, one which is mainly used for devotional purposes, both for that class of devotion in which the worshipper abandons himself at the feet of the Master, and for that in which the devotee aspires to raise himself into unity with the Object of adoration. We shall deal with this in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IX

MANTRIC AND SYMBOLIC MEDITATION

THERE is another method of meditation widely spread in India, where a hundred million people daily offer their devotions to Shri Krshna, the Lord of Love. The devotee directs his mind to meditate upon Shri Krshna, the incarnate God, and through Him upon Shri Krshna, the Spirit of Knowledge and Love in the world. Very often you may hear him repeating again and again a sentence or chant, while he intently ponders upon its deep and varied meaning, and this chant, when repeated with true devotion, brings the devotee into daily touch with the great Lord, the Officer of the Source of Life in our world, the Messenger of the Great Sun. It does not matter whether as a Hindu you worship with the name of Shri Krshna, or as a Christian you worship with the name of the Christ, or as a Buddhist with that of the Bodhisattva: your aspiration reaches the one Great Being who focuses the devotion of the world.

Of all the mantras of Shri Krshna, none is more powerful than the five-divisioned, eighteen syllabled mantra given, it is said, by the Lord Himself to Brahma, and so handed down into the world:

"Klīm Krshnāya, Govindāya, Gopī-jana Vallabhāya,
Swāhā!"¹

Again and again the devotee repeats this mantra, and by it he attains to the path of Shri Krshna in this world.

Once the Sages came to the great Brahma and asked: Who is the Supreme God? Whom does Death fear? Through the knowledge of what does all become known? What makes this world continue on its course?

¹ Pronounce i as ee; a as in 'father'; a as in 'India'; o as in 'go'; r as between ri and ru, i.e., vowel r.

He replied: Shri Krshna verily is the Supreme God. Death is afraid of Govinda (Shri Krshna). By knowing the Lord of Gopijana (Shri Krshna) the whole is known. By Swaha the world goes on evolving.

Then they questioned him again: Who is Krshna? Who is Govinda? Who is the Lord of Gopi-jana? What is Swaha?

He replied: Krshna is He who destroys all wrong. Govinda is the Knower of all things, who, on earth, is known through the Great Teaching. The Lord of Gopi-jana is He who guides all conditioned beings. Swaha is His power. He who meditates on these, repeats the mantra, and worships Him, becomes immortal.

Again they asked him: What is His form? What is His mantra? What is His Worship?

He replied: He who has the form of a protector of cows (the verses of the Great Teaching). The cloud-coloured youth (the colour of the fathomless deep). He who sits at the root of the Tree (whose spreading branches are the creation and evolution of the age). He whose eyes are like the full-blown lotus (always resting in the pure lotus hearts of His devotees). He whose raiment is of the splendour of lightning (shining by its own light). He who is two-armed (the life and the form). He who is possessed of the sign of Wisdom (with which the silent Sages are initiated). He who wears a garland of flowers (the string of globes or planets). He who is seated on the centre of the Golden Lotus (at the heart of all). Who meditates upon Him becomes free. His is the mantra of five parts. The first is: Klim Krshnaya. Klim is the seed of attraction. The second is: Govindaya. The third is: Gopi-jana. The fourth is: Vallabhaya. The fifth and last is: Swaha. Klim—to Krshna—to the Giver of Knowledge—to the Lord of the Cowherds—Swaha!

Om. Adoration to the Universal Form, the Source of all Protection, the Goal of Life, the Ruler of the Universe, and the Universe itself.

Om. Adoration to the Embodiment of Wisdom, the Supreme Delight, Krshna, the Lord of Cowherds! To the Giver of Knowledge, adoration!¹

Exercise 15. If you would practice this form of meditation, sit quietly in your usual place and let your thoughts and feelings simmer down until your mind dwells peacefully upon the thought of the Great Teacher

¹ From the *Gopalatapani*, and *Krshna Upanishats*.

of gods and men. Think of all the conditions of success in life, kingship and wealth and worldly love and learning, and see how imperfect and dissatisfying all these are, and how all the good in them is but a reflection in dull matter of His perfect knowledge and power and love. All earthly love is beset with misunderstandings; all earthly power is beset with obstacles; all earthly knowledge is beset with error; but in Him there is no misunderstanding, no impediment, no wrong. Now imagine in your own heart a rose-bud or a lotus-bud. Let your mind look at it peacefully, as it droops upon its stem. Gradually, while you pronounce the word Klim with intent longing for the presence of the Divine, raise up the flower now blossoming, and see, sitting on that twelve-petalled throne, the divine form of Shri Krshna, the cloud-coloured youth with lotus eyes and the garland of the worlds, at the root of the Tree of Life, his raiment shining with the splendour of lightning. And as you bow before him, saying Krshnāya, pour out your devotion to Him. And as you say Govindāya, see Him raise His hand with the sign of Wisdom in blessing. And as you repeat Gopi-jana-Vallabhaya, let His power and love thrill in you and irradiate you. And as you utter Swāha, throw out by your will all that force, so that the world may share. And now repeat seven times the mantra of Shri Krshna, contemplating the Divine Form in the flower of your heart.

CHAPTER X

OBSTACLES TO MEDITATION

IF you have resolved upon true success in life, that is, to live and grow in accordance with the Great Law, and if you have said: I WILL, you will find sooner or later that you have done three things. The first of these things was to get your head pointing in the right direction. The second was to keep it there. The third was to make an effort; not to hurry, but just to drive forward and not stop for anything. Constantly, for a long time to come, you will need to revise these three steps; to see that you are going the right way, to keep from deviating, and to drive on. Put in as much force as you can when you are sure that you are going in the right direction, not before. If you put in much force when you are off the track you will do much damage to yourself and others, and make immense obstacles for yourself in the future; but if you keep straight the harder you drive the greater will be your success, and you will meet fewer obstacles, or none. And in order to keep straight always remember that others also want the things which you seek. Let them have what they want. Never deprive another of that which you value yourself whether it be liberty or power, knowledge or learning, love or friendship; so will you always follow the wheels of the chariot of the Great Law. If you find yourself trying to gain power over others, seeking to surpass others in knowledge, or to attract the love or praise of others, you may know that you are dangerously off the track. Take care, if this is so, that you drive very, very gently so that you never hurt a living thing in thought or feeling or body, by thought or word or act. But if you are on the track, drive as hard as you can, always taking care that you never hurt a living thing.

These three things you will find yourself doing with regard to conduct and activity in the course of your daily life, and in that portion of the day which you have given over to meditation, there also you will find the same three stages. The first is the practice of concentration, the bringing of your mind into such a state of attention with regard to one thing that all incoming ideas are polarised to that. The second is the practice of meditation, keeping your thought constantly flowing towards that one thing without being attracted aside by anything else. The third is contemplation; driving at the one thing or drawing it into yourself so that you and it are made one.

Before you can pass on from meditation to contemplation you must be able to give up wishing and hoping entirely at least during the period of practice. The mind can never be single while wishes occupy it; every wish is also a seed from which may spring anger, untruthfulness, robbery, impurity, greed, carelessness, discontent, sloth, ignorance and resentment; and while one wish or hope remains within you all these violations of the Law are possible. Give up wishing and hoping; say: I WILL, and have FAITH; stand out of your own light and let the Great Law work its will and way.

If only you can maintain this attitude there will be no obstacles in your meditation, but if you have it not they will constantly come in and spoil your work. Every time that you sit down to think, these wishes, these unsatisfactions, will call you aside. There is a familiar saying that nature abhors a vacuum. Let us present it in a new form, saying that the human mind abhors a vacuum. The stream of thought is ever seeking to flow aside into the little gullies and channels left open by unsatisfied desires and indecisive thought. As a mountain stream may rush past fissures and crevices at its sides, so may a headlong thinker push on his argument, unheeding of the many side issues involved. But when the

stream debuts upon the level plains every obstacle causes it to spread and broaden its path and every hollow must be filled before the water can pass on. It is not unlike this with the process of thought; when it meets a barrier in front it turns aside, fills all the little creeks, deepens, and at last flows above the barriers.

In the practice of meditation you will find this process going on in your own mind. Every little unsatisfied desire, every un-thought-out problem, will present a hungry mouth ever calling aside your attention; and inevitably in your meditation when the train of thought meets a difficulty it will swing aside to attend to these calls. In simple language, you will find the course of your meditation constantly interrupted by thoughts and desires which rise up from the recesses of your own mind. When you trace out these interrupting chains of thought you will find that they have their source in unsatisfied desires and unsettled problems.

To clear away these obstructions it is little use trying to repress and suppress them. A better plan is to give them their due, appoint them a time and think them out. A mind that cannot overcome such vacillation as leaves its problems perpetually unsettled cannot succeed in meditation. A man for this purpose must decide to arbitrate his problems, abide by his own decisions and refuse to think the same matter over and over again. The ability to do this grows with practice and with the habit of putting decisions into action. Fill up all the chinks of thought and bend the little side-rills round so that they discharge themselves into the main stream. Think out every problem and interruption that comes in the light of its bearing and effect upon your main purpose. The development of a general philosophic mood which brings its experiences and faculties to a unity of understanding and purpose is essential for the successful pursuit of meditation.

With the devotee the interruptions rise mostly from

desire. A lingering half-concealed longing will blossom into a train of emotion, thought prompted by desire, as soon as the stream of devotional emotion exhausts its impulse and the object ceases to present novelty and wonder, and the cup of delight seems empty. The desires must be settled, not by destruction of desire, but by being led, as they arise, into the main stream of emotional outpouring, and merged in the one overwhelming desire to feel the presence of the Divine. The Divine can be sought and found in any place and at any time, and when this is felt all disturbing fears, regrets and anxieties are swallowed up in the great delight of an ever-present opportunity to fulfill the most holy and all-embracing of desires.

Among these unsatisfactions, one that stands out very prominently in the thoughts of many aspirants to higher consciousness is the eagerness to find a teacher. It is the greatest encouragement to know that there are Those who have once been as ourselves, who have achieved greatness and entered the higher consciousness, and that They appear now and then to earnest seekers, and teach them the way. But if you use this blessed knowledge wrongly, as so many do, and fall into the constant habit of uneasy craving for assistance, you will find this one of the greatest obstacles to meditation. It is surely right that in the midst of our self-reliance we should always recognise the necessity of a teacher. But remember that you always have a teacher at your side, though that teacher is not necessarily a man at first or at any time. Perhaps you have found a book that for the time inspires you; let that be your teacher for the time being; do not crave for a teacher while neglecting the teacher which is at your hand. The knowers of yoga have ever asserted that at a certain stage in your progress, when you have used to the full all the general knowledge that you find in books or obtain from those who know the beginnings of the art, then the great Teacher will appear to you. He will not come before, because to do so would be an injury, not a benefit, to you. As it says in an ancient scripture:

"Learn with reverence, with searching thought and with service; then the Wise Ones who know the truth will appear and teach you the wisdom." But do not forget that the teacher is at your hand every moment, and will speak with you when you choose to prefer him to the things of confusion which at present you seek to grasp, to know and to fondle.

Yet another serious obstacle is the craving for some special method of meditation, and an eagerness to know whether to meditate in the heart, in the head, in the little finger, or in some other place. Do not trouble about these things at all, unless they are prescribed for *you* by a competent teacher; but meditate right down inside *yourself*. Go deep enough to forget your body for the time being, for remember the whole purpose of meditation is first to modify yourself, to alter your own shape of mind, and then to grow on the new axes that you have thus formed. First make your shape, and then grow, for you will find that you cannot have real power and freedom until you are harmless, you cannot have real knowledge until you are utterly true, you cannot have the real joy of life until you are full of sympathy, love and reverence. Certainly there are many tricks and stunts which you might learn by special means, but these do not belong to the aristocracy of the profession of life.

Be frank with yourself. Clearly define your purpose and settle upon the best means that lead thereto. Life is serious. You cannot afford to play with your destiny and palter with your principles. If you still seek above all things the satisfaction of worldly ambitions and possessions, acknowledge the fact to yourself and consistently pursue the object to success; but a mind divided against itself will never stand for long. Success in meditation will not come until you disband the conflicting hosts of desires that perpetually carry on their civil wars within you, and thus come to be at peace with yourself. Then that peace within will put you at peace with all the worlds.

CHAPTER XI

CONTEMPLATION

CONTEMPLATION has three stages:

- (1) The attention must be concentrated on the object.
- (2) It must be stirred into activity with reference to that object alone.
- (3) It must remain actively centered on the object while its own lower activities are successively suppressed.

In the second stage we discern what the object is as compared with other things and in relation to them. We go on with this process of reasoning and argument until we can reason and argue no more about the object; then we suppress the process, stopping all comparing and arguing, with the attention fixed actively upon the object, trying to penetrate the indefiniteness which for us then appears to surround it.

It will be seen that throughout the three stages great concentration is required, so that the activity of thought may be maintained within a circle so small that the centre of it is always within the sphere of attention. The process of contemplation will really commence when the conscious activity begins to run, as it were, at right angles to the usual thought activity which endeavours to understand a thing in reference to other things of its own nature and plane; such movement cutting across the planes of its existence and penetrating into its subtle and inner nature. When the attention is no longer divided into parts by the activities of comparing, the mind will be moving as a whole, and will seem quite still, just as a spinning top may appear to stand still when it is in most rapid motion.

When the whole of your attention is occupied with the one thing, if you can thus raise your conception of the thing, without letting the attention stray to any other object, it is evident that you will be suppressing the lower types of vibration in your own mind and vivifying with your energy only the higher, in short, you will be raising the activity of your consciousness to a higher plane.

Suppose, for example, you take some idea, such as that of justice, you might first consider some form of justice, the manifestation of justice in an act, in such a manner that the whole of your mind is occupied with that; then you might turn to the thought of the psychological effects of justice on the doer and the receiver, and allow this to occupy the entire mind; and then once more pass from that to an endeavour to comprehend abstract justice, and thus continue the mental effort until you can carry your thought no further, but find it in, as it were, an open space, and unable to grasp anything clearly. When you thus, by an effort of will, hold your thought at a level beyond that at which its normal activities go on, it is obvious that then you can no longer be *thinking about* the object, but only contemplating it. If you are able to do so it will be better to avoid starting this process with the thought of yourself and the object as two different things in relation to each other, for then you will not easily escape this idea of its relation to yourself and thus will not be able to obtain the idea untinctured with feeling. But if you can reach such a point of self-detachment as to start your contemplation from the inside of the thing itself, and still keep up your mental enthusiasm and energy all along the line of thought, from the name to the form of the object, from that to its psychological aspect (to its feeling or thought, if it is a sentient object or to the feeling and thought which it awakens in a sentient mind, if it is a quality), from that to its abstract nature (to its nature in simultaneous relation to all conceivable manifestations of itself) in which both

word and form have disappeared—and you are able to hold the mind there, trying to pierce the indefiniteness that surrounds this state (and yet using no words or forms for that purpose), just as you might try to penetrate a mist with physical vision, then, holding yourself there, looking forward and never thinking of turning back, poised, as it were, like a bird on the wing, you will accomplish contemplation.

Let us take some definite examples in order to make the method more comprehensible. If I fix my attention on this sheet of paper I may consider what sort, size, shape, colour, texture, thickness, variety of paper it is, what relation it bears to other sheets of paper in the book, where and how it was made, and many other things in connection with it. Suppose, however, I wish to contemplate it, then I will start with my attention on the paper and, after observing it, carefully proceed to think of its more subtle nature, of its composition, of the subtle elements that make it up, and what it would be like to a vision which had to do with such subtle realities and was not fixed upon the grosser aggregates of physical matter which is so compounded that it becomes visible to physical sight. Going beyond that I might try to conceive what is the nature of those invisible particles composing it and make an effort to apply to them a kind of mental perception, not mere words and definitions. Such a course would end in the process of contemplation. If, however, an object possessing consciousness is selected, more stages will be available. Suppose, for example, we take a dog. I concentrate my attention on the dog, not thinking of that dog in relation to myself as regards action or emotion or position or relativity of any kind. I pass from that to an effort to understand the inner nature of the object, the feelings and thoughts that may occupy it, and endeavour to realise its state of consciousness. It is difficult to go further with an animal. If one ventures to fix his attention upon a superior being, one would pass from the physical appearance to meditate

upon the state of feeling and emotion and thought, and so try to rise inwards to grasp the state of consciousness which he enjoys. In any of these cases, when I have carried my thought inwards until it can go no further and I cannot grasp clearly what is before it, though I know that there is something there, and hold to that position without going back or turning aside, I am in a state of contemplation with reference to the inner nature of that object. This is a process which must generally be practiced hundreds of times, whenever opportunity offers, before any success will come. It will be seen that in this contemplation there is nothing in the nature of sleep or mental inactivity, but an intense search, a prolonged effort to see in the indefiniteness something definite, without descending to the ordinary lower regions of conscious activity in which our sight is normally clear and precise.

One who has an intense affection for an object of worship, as a Christian devotee would have for the Christ, or a Hindu for Shri Krshna, can follow the same method, but in his case the activity would be mainly one of feeling. By such a course the ordinary feelings which arise upon contemplation of a Being who will guard and protect us and, generally speaking, give us this day our daily bread, are stilled, and a superior set of feelings is aroused into activity. The devotee would first picture in imagination the Divine Form, the particular form which he regards as a special manifestation of God. He would dwell upon that, allowing his feelings to flow out towards it in affection, admiration and reverence. He would picture himself as in the company of that Divine Being, associated with Him in the incidents of His life. Then, when his feelings were at their height, he would make an effort to pass from the outer form to realise the feelings and thoughts which animate that Divine Form in such adorable ways, and would think how these gave rise to the wholly delightful exterior, and thus his own feelings would be transformed. He would begin to realise, with ardent devotion, the finer characteristics of the Divine

nature. At first he would regard God, manifested in a particular form, as the proprietor of all things, and would perform all the acts of his life in order to please Him. Now he begins to see that the finer qualities so transcendently manifest in that divine form appear in some measure in all other forms also, and he begins to realise that there is something of the Divine Nature in all things—that God pervades where He possesses. Thus carrying his passionate attachment into a subtler condition, the worshipper begins to perceive God in all forms and to feel for them an ardent affection, insomuch as they manifest Him. Yet he need not lose his adoration for the best beloved Form, just as a mother, while loving brothers and sisters and other relations and friends, is still most fond of her babe. A further step is taken when the devotee passes from the contemplation of the feelings and thoughts that animate the Divine Form, to the principle of utter and unconditional loving and giving which it embodies, and now instead of thinking that there is something of God in all forms he will realise that all exist in God, that each represents and reproduces Him, though not in His fulness, yet just so much of it as there is, is God, and if anything seems to be evil or ugly that is because he feels there a little absence of that which he knows to be Divine. Yet all that there is manifests God, and through each thing he recognises Him; as the devotee, though daring to look only at the feet of the embodied Saviour, would yet love the whole of Him, so also while he sees there but imperfect manifestations of God, yet through those he knows himself to be ever in the presence of the Divine. And if by the processes of contemplation he can carry on into those higher regions the ardour of his personal passion for the Divine Form, he will thus abide constantly in the ecstasy of His presence, feeling all things to be forms of Him, and all acts to be His performance. In the course of this practice also there will be times when the devotee will lose grasp, as he goes onward, of the things which he can clearly realise. He will find himself in a region of emotional

indefiniteness and be tempted to sink back to dwell upon the more familiar forms; but he should hold on and maintain the ardour of his feelings while trying to grasp at what may seem the empty air of loftier conceptions of the Divine.

Another form of contemplation, in great favour in the school of the unequalled Shrī Shankarāchārya, is the contemplation of one's own true nature. Look at the body and consider its various parts. Gaze at the hand; look at it intently as mere dissociated form, until you realise that "such a queer thing cannot be I." Apply the same thought to any part of the body. Look in a mirror at your own eyes and realise that they also cannot be yourself. Subject and object can never be the same, and I am the subject, the perceiver, not the form, the perceived. What then are you? The invisible mind which uses this aggregate called the body? Inspect the mind as you have examined the body. You have discovered that you are not fingers and thumbs and eyes. Are you anger, fear, trust, doubt, kindness, reverence, pride, or any other of the various modes of action of the mind? Are you to be found in its modes of receiving knowledge? Are you reason, or perception, or the faculty of discrimination? Surely not. These are the elements which aggregate to compose the mind, and thus this mind cannot be myself. The mind is only an aggregate, a collection of objective things, an external thing, and not myself. I look down upon it and *know* that it is not myself. Whence, then, does the conception of individuality arise? Am I this personality, this John Smith or Lord Whiptop? Certainly not; this is a mere collection of associations which I am temporarily using, having gathered them round myself and shut myself in with them by a long series of imperfect imaginings. No other person can speak of me, can praise or blame me; they know only this outer thing. If I in the past have fallen in love with this body and mind, become infatuated with it, as Narcissus with his reflection in the pool, still there

is no need that I should continue the error. What then is the I, when you have thus struck away these temporary external coverings? That question can be answered only by each one for himself when he realises his own inner nature, having cast away layer after layer of the outer crust having broken away the shell to find the kernel within.

It would be a mistake to suppose that, as this process of inner search for yourself goes on, your own nature is discovered to be more indefinite. Such an idea arises from the erroneous supposition that only the outer body is warm and full of the wine of life, while the inner is chill and empty. Some philosophers have ventured to say that one cannot remain awake in the body without some bodily feeling, but that is only another way of saying that one cannot remain awake in the body without some sensibility of the body, that one cannot think of the body without feeling it in some way, which is no doubt true. But it is possible to lose sight for a time of the existence of the body and find oneself something beyond it and independent of it.

What are the results of denying, in this contemplation, our identity with the outer bodies and the mind? What is the effect of this realisation that the mind with all its contents is a thing that we use, and not ourselves? Does it mean that the inner man is left more and more attributeless—changeless, powerless, loveless, ignorant? It does not. In the process you are not divesting yourself of attributes, but of limitations. The mind is swifter and freer than the body, and beyond the mind is the spirit, which is freer and swifter still. Love is more possible in the quietude of the heart than in any outer expression, but in the spirit beyond the mind it is divinely certain. Reason and judgment ever correct the halting evidence of the senses; the vision of the spirit discerns the truth without organs and without mind.

AFTERWORD

If you have said: I WILL then choose what you will have, and the nearer your choice is to the heart of the Great Law the sooner you will succeed. Give rein to your fancy and picture to yourself the liberty and the might and the love and the knowledge that will be yours. Your chariot shall be the lightning flash, and your raiment the splendour of the sun, and your voice shall be the thunder of the spheres. The divinest knowledge shall be your food, and the ethereal blue your home. Yours shall be the strength of mountains, the power of the tempest, the force of the ocean, the beauty of the sunrise, the triumph of the noonday sun, the liberty of the wind, the gentleness of the flowers, the peace of the evening twilight, the purity of eternal snow.

Do you say that this is extravagant? It is not so. It is true that you cannot achieve this success in one brief life of fifty years. Reason tells you that the accomplishment of a lifetime must be far short of this. First of all believe in your own immortality, then realise that the future is full of splendour without limit, of achievement beyond, and beyond, and beyond again the most avaricious dreams of imagination and that that achievement is a matter for your choosing now. Death is but a trifling episode in our age-long life. Through its portal we go as one rises from a bed of sickness to go out into the sunshine. If we set our hearts upon the superhuman things, then we shall achieve. If we fix our ambitions in human life, these also we shall attain in constant rebirth. Believe in your own immortality, give wings to your imagination, say: This is within my reach, I WILL ACHIEVE—and success will come sooner than you expect. It may be a few thousand years, but do you dread that? If so, you have not willed but only wished, for if you had willed

you would know that the result is certain, and what is sure is as good as though it were already here. Fix your thought upon your ideal; it will come, and its time is as good as now, and, in the light of that certainty, what may happen to us between now and then can matter not at all, and of no moment can be the road we take to that stupendous goal.

APPENDIX

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE PROCESS OF CONTEMPLATION

LET us distinguish clearly between modes of knowing and knowledge itself. Language is a mode of knowing. When we have formulated facts in satisfactory words it is our habit to believe that we then know those facts. But words are only a lower vehicle of knowledge, a substitute for facts, like the terms in Algebra; at best they only suggest ideas; they cannot replace them and they must be transcended as we approach closer to a real knowledge of the relations between things. All the forms that we see and that we can visualise are only an imperfect mode of knowledge, and they also will be transcended in due course. This does not mean, however, that real knowledge is less definite than what is embodied in words; though it might seem so to one who approaches it by metaphysical argument, it certainly does not appear so to one who reaches it directly by the practice of contemplation. That practice, we may repeat, is one of gradual passage from the perception of the grosser to that of the finer qualities of things, without losing the warmth, vividness and definiteness or, in short, the vigour of outer experience.

The key to success at every step of the practice may be stated in a few words: *Obstruct the lower activities while maintaining the full flow of conscious energy.* First the lower mind must be made vigorous and alert: then its activity must be obstructed while the impetus gained is used to exercise and develop the higher faculties within. Let us pause to notice the activities of mind that are to be transcended. They constitute that which within us engages itself in observing, perceiving, classifying, associating, and reasoning. The mind distinguishes the

differences between things ; it finds out their common characteristics and classifies them ; it infers the relationship between them and argues from the seen to the unseen, from the present to the past and the future ; it realises objects as things known by itself and associated with it, affecting it and being affected by it. Its general purpose is to decide in what manner action can best be carried out for the fulfilment of desires, and to select among the desires themselves.

If it were possible for all desires to meet with instant fulfilment there would be no desire, for desire exists only while its purpose is unattained and dies at the moment of its full satisfaction. Suppose that in the process of evolution, action had never met with obstruction, desire would never have appeared in this world, for desire chooses among actions. Desires and emotions grow and become strong when action is moving towards an object and is thwarted in its effort. Desire is thus concerned with the selection of activities, but a higher authority comes into play in the course of our evolution and in turn begins to select among desires. Desires and emotions multiply to such an extent that a conflict arises among them, as they cannot all be satisfied at once. Then each prefers its claim before the intellect, and by thought the man begins to select the desires that are desirable and separate them from the desires that are undesirable. Thus with the obstruction of desires the mental activities increase and multiply.

The ancient teachers of Yoga carry the argument a step further and declare that, in theory and in practice, when the processes of the thinking mind are repressed by the active will, man finds himself in a new state of consciousness which transcends the ordinary thinking and governs it, just as thought transcends and selects among desires, and just as desires prompt to particular actions and efforts. Such a superior state of consciousness cannot be described in terms of the lower mind,

but its attainment means that the man is conscious that he is something above mind and thought even though mental activity may be going on, just as all cultured people recognise that they are not the body, even while they may be walking down the street.

The practice of obstruction of thought must be applied to all the divisions of the mind. Carefully analyse the analytical faculty of mind. How do we analyse? By comparison noting points of similarity and of difference. But to distinguish one thing perfectly its comparison with all is required; and as this is true of all things, perfect perception sees the same, the all, to whatever it turns, and discrimination of the many things as different disappears. Analysis is analysed away. Again, in the current of events one thing is what and where and when it is because all things are so; and since this is true of all things, particular causality disappears. We are indeed whirling through space, mentally as well as physically, on a ball which has itself no foundation or support. Both the mental and the physical forms of existence, as conceived by the normal man, are one vast fallacy and self-contradiction. This limited and baseless outlook upon life is positively and literally *absurd*.

The conception of the object of contemplation as something outside of me, which I am observing, is equally absurd. There is no line or bar where "I" leaves off and "that" begins. The distinction between the subject and the object vanishes when we realise that these are only two ends of one stick, or that the "I" is the unchanging, unmodified witness of all the changes and modifications *within* itself.

There is another state of existence, or rather another living conception of life, beyond the mind with its laboured processes of discernment of comparisons and causal relations between things. That higher state is only to be realised when the activities of consciousness are carried in all their earthly fervour and vigour, beyond

the groping cave-life in which they normally dwell. That higher consciousness will come to all men sooner or later; and when it comes to any one of us all his life will suddenly appear changed. We shall no longer be staggered by the thought of eternal life in the ever-changing universe of time; we shall not now be appalled by the fearful possibility of eternal rest in changelessness; for these are but the conceptions of the little mind, applying its puny standards to the limitless glory of the life divine. No, we shall achieve that illumination which makes all plain, and shows the rock on which all things are safely based.

Destiny

*"There is a Destiny that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."*

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